

Raymond Williams; Towards a Sociology of Culture

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## ABSTRACT

### RAYMOND WILLIAMS; TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

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This dissertation is a study of Raymond Williams's work in the sociology of culture taking into account the whole corpus of his works. The methodological strategy is derived from Glucksmann (1974). The emphasis is on structural and internal analysis which comprises epistemological, philosophical, theoretical, methodological and substantive dimensions of Williams's problematic or thought style. The examination includes: tracing the roots of Williams's intellectual formations, both his lived experiences and the literary and Marxist influences; a critique of the epistemological dimensions and methodological issues and a synopsis and commentary of his work centering on culture. An analytic model is extrapolated from Williams's theorizing on culture with reference to the cultural form, English-language radio drama produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction: Raymond Williams

To recover the complexity of a received tradition which had become radically conservative "against democracy, socialism, the working class or popular education" (1979B:98): this was the aim of Raymond Williams when he wrote his first definitive work Culture and Society (1958) almost thirty years ago. In the course of his search Williams has made a unique contribution to the study of culture.

Williams's scope is comprehensive and interdisciplinary. His works range from sociology, the history of ideas, political and social treatises, semantic inquiry, analyses of drama, literary criticism, cultural theory, to technology and communication. On a fictional plane, he has written a number of novels, short stories, a drama and radio and documentary film scripts. His work penetrates received traditions in literature and in sociology. His accomplishments are no less than prodigious. He has developed a distinctive position, cultural materialism, always keeping to the fore his preoccupations with community and communications, participatory democracy, human agency and responsibility.

This dissertation is a study of Williams's work in the sociology of culture. The thrust of the examination includes: tracing the genealogy of Williams's

problematic; an analysis of his problematic along epistemological, philosophic, theoretical, methodological and substantive dimensions; and the extrapolation of a model of analysis which reveals the promises and the problems of Williams's formulations. The outcome of this inquiry is a clarification of Williams's complex problematic: its dualities, contradictions, continuities and contributions.

### Organization of the Study

The thesis is organized in the following way. In the remainder of this chapter, a "Brief Historical Development of the Culture Concept in British Intellectual Thought," situates Williams's intellectual formations both the literary and the Marxist streams and a section on "Biography and Bibliography", traces Williams's output through three distinct phases. The chapter ends with an indication of the scope and the significance of the study.

Chapter two, "Critical Issues and Research Strategy", is a review of some issues in the critical literature on Williams and a note on the methodological approach taken.

Chapter three, "Place and Politics: Conditions of a Dualist Vision", draws out the experiences of Williams's formative years and the base of his dual vision -- working class and Cambridge elite, Wales and England, church and chapel -- and his political stance.

In chapters four and five, respectively, "Against the Grain of the Dominant Literary Tradition" and "Against the Grain of the Dominant Marxist Tradition", the genesis of Williams's intellectual formation is examined. The dualism that is the ground of his thought style is elucidated. Both literary and Marxist traditions are comprehended.

Chapters three to five are largely expository because of the nature of their content. They provide the contextual basis for an understanding of Williams's problematic and for the creation of a model of analysis.

Chapter six, "Cultural Materialist Problematic; Epistemology" is a critical analysis of the epistemological dimension of Williams's problematic. The basic contradiction in Williams's problematic is located at the level of epistemology. The methodological problems related to the epistemology are indicated.

Chapter seven, "Towards a Sociology of Culture: Synopsis and Commentary" is a review of Williams's hypothetical formulations on the sociology of culture and a gloss or commentary on each area within the field. Much weight is given to this exposition as it is from this figuration that a model of analysis is drawn.

In chapter eight, "Towards a Model of 'Culture as a Realized and Related Signifying System'", is a

description of an analytical model that is drawn from Williams's theorizing on the sociology of culture. Both the promise and problems of Williams's problematic are explicated as the theory is viewed in relation to a practice. Here reference is made to a specific Canadian cultural practice -- radio drama as produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

Some 8000 original and indigenous Canadian radio dramas produced by the CBC are available for study and constitute most of the archival collection of the Concordia Centre for Broadcasting Studies (See Fink, 1974, 1977, 1981A, 1981B, 1982, 1983). From literary and sociological perspectives this cultural form is of great interest. Not only is it a special literary and dramatic form, but it is a mass media practice developed, produced, and broadcast by the C.B.C. From the beginning, the C.B.C. had as its mandate the protection of Canadian culture and the development of national unity. Its major activity is the dissemination of information, knowledge, ideas and values. Radio drama is an appropriate vehicle on an aesthetic literary and dramatic plane for such dissemination. As a feature of the ideological realm, this literary and dramatic form is related in identifiable ways to economic and political practices in Canadian society. The availability of these materials and the need for an appropriate framework of analysis first prompted this study of Raymond Williams.

Chapter nine, "Continuities, Contradictions, and Conclusions", summarizes Williams's problematic along epistemological, philosophical, theoretical, methodological and substantive dimensions. The continuities and contradictions are drawn out and the dissertation concludes with directions for further study.

But first, Williams's thinking is situated in its intellectual milieu.

#### A Brief Historical Development of the Culture Concept in British Intellectual Thought

During the nineteenth century the concept of culture was at the center of discussions about the relations of art and society. <sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold (Culture and Anarchy, 1869) is distinguished from those who preceded him, such as Coleridge, in putting the idea of culture to the forefront of literary and social critique. Both classical and romantic visions asserted the superiority of art and the special role of the artist in society. The romantic poets -- such as Wordsworth and Shelley -- gave this vision its most vivid expression.

Arnold disagreed with the romantic impulse that led to the isolation of the artist and the idea of "art for art's sake". He rejected "...the romantic idea that the source of enlightenment lay within the self" (Johnson, 1979:33). Nevertheless he was influenced by the romantic tradition to the extent that the idea of



culture and the ideal of perfection was the aim for both the individual and society. In Culture and Anarchy Arnold gave expression to his views on culture as "...a social idea; ... of getting to know the best that has been thought and said; and ... the need to turn a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits" (Johnson, 1979:28). His critique of Victorian England, the ills of industrialization, and the trend towards individualism and materialism, stemmed from his humanist stance. In spite of his humanist vision, Arnold maintained an elitist thrust. He saw reform through moral and cultural change, and not through any actual structural change in society.

William Morris shared Arnold's humanist vision, but rejected elitism and the hierarchical imperative that it implied. His goal as a socialist was the radical transformation of the structures of society. Though the term culture was not manifest in his writing, he and his mentor, John Ruskin, were certain that society had to change if art was to be perfected.

By the end of the nineteenth century the centrality of the concept of culture and its association with art and society was submerged. Two other views concerned with art and society came to dominate: aestheticism and socialism.

Aestheticism -- the romantic impulse which carried individualism to its logical conclusion -- meant the isolation of the artist from the social world, and

upholding the principle of art as an autonomous realm. The Pre-Raphaelites and the Bloomsbury group exemplify this subjectivistic aesthetic trend. Of the two, the Pre-Raphaelites were more concerned for society.

Within socialist thought there were three main tendencies: (1) those who were influenced by the earlier Fabian tradition, (2) those who carried on a critique of industrialism and (3) those who looked to Marx and Engels.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast with developments on the Continent, socialism in England at this time was largely influenced by Owenism and Fabianism.<sup>3</sup> In the Fabian tradition, Douglas Jay and Evan Durban continued to promote the cause of socialism through democratic processes rather than revolution. Writers such as H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw criticized society in the spirit of the Fabian tradition. It was not a radical transformation of society that was sought, but reform within the political structures. Though Wells and Shaw differed on many issues, they both rejected Fabianism at times. Both held to a hierarchical vision of society. Art was perceived not as a superior realm but as a powerful medium through which ideas could be disseminated.

In the first half of the twentieth century, a number of literary intellectuals brought the idea of culture into center focus again as the major critique of modern industrial society. The critique on

industrialism extended the work of William Morris and John Ruskin. In Tawney's "Acquisitive Society" and in D.H. Lawrence's novels and essays "the critique of industrialism found perhaps its most influential expression" (Plant in Cox and Dyson, 1972:69). In addition to the criticism of individualism and materialism, there were concerns about the development and increasing dominance of science. Specialization, fragmentation and quantification threatened to pervade all intellectual and humanistic inquiry.

T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis were prominent in speaking out against the ills of industrialized society and as culture critics. Eliot's stance on culture articulated a preservation of the traditions of society, at the cost of democracy if necessary. Leavis defined culture as a moral ideal, similar to the nineteenth-century romantic poets. Though he criticized the institutions of modern society -- education, mass media and advertising -- his idea of culture lacked the force of Arnold's. There was a lack of clarity and consistency in his use of the term. At times culture was an ideal to be achieved; at other times, it was through the arts that these ideals were seen to be perfected. Like Eliot, he advocated a return to traditions and the necessity of elite management and control. He would not accept the idea of a radical change of the structures of society. The thinking of the Marxists was anathema to Leavis (See

Chapter 4 for the impact of Eliot and Leavis on Williams).

In socialist thought Plant proposed that "Apart from Lenin and Trotsky, the Marxist thinker who had the most influence during this period, and indeed since, was undoubtedly George Lukacs" (Plant, in Cox and Dyson, 1972:81). Lukacs confronted the orthodox and scientific version of what had become the received tradition in Marxism in his work "History and Class Consciousness" (1971). He expounded a humanist radical critique of capitalist industrial society using historical and economic analyses. Lukacs's influence was widespread in social and political thought as well as in literary circles. His ideas were important in Mannheim's work and the development of the sociology of knowledge. In his articulation of the relations between literature and society Lucien Goldmann drew on Lukacs. The influence of Lukacs on Williams's thought is examined in Chapter 5.

Williams's thought is situated in the British intellectual milieu. As will be pointed out, it is very much against the conservatism of Eliot and Leavis, as well as the dogmatism of the Marxist views which prevailed in the 1930's and 1940's that Williams builds his critique in the 1950s. The humanist stance of the romantic tradition; the social and moral critique of modern industrial society that is part of the Arnoldian view; the holistic thrust of Lukacs; and the central

focus on culture, communication and community all coalesce in a particular alignment that is Williams's special contribution.

By the 1970s a number of different perspectives on cultural studies emerged in Britain. Williams, E.P. Thompson (1963) and Richard Hoggart (1957) all published their first books in the 1950s. Each was ignorant of the others' work prior to publication. Though related in terms of field of interest, each of these thinkers represents a different school of thought. At issue in the work of E.P. Thompson is a "culturalist" tendency. Though a class analysis is fundamental to his work, especially as exemplified in The Making of the English Class (1963), the economic factors tend to be overshadowed by his analysis of the cultural and political questions. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, founded by Hoggart in 1964, came under the direction of Stuart Hall (1964) in the 1970s. Moving away from the approach of the literary tradition, the Centre sought to concentrate on theoretical and empirical concerns. Work on the social production of art and aesthetics was also being developed by Janet Wolff (1975, 1981, 1983) at the University of Leeds. In yet another direction, Terry Eagleton (1976A, 1976B, 1978, 1981), a former student of Williams, developed a perspective on cultural analysis from an anti-humanist, Althusserian frame before moving on to other interests.

Stephen Heath, associated with those involved in the journals "Screen" and "Screen Education", was developing a semiotic approach to film.

This phenomenon of converging yet divergent views that has burgeoned in Britain and elsewhere has not yet sorted itself out. In the short term, this thesis, undertakes to explicate Williams's problematic. In the long term, this work is intended to contribute to comparative analyses of contemporary cultural criticism.

#### Biography and Bibliography

There is a close and acknowledged connection between Williams's biography and bibliography (see Appendix 1: Giddens, 1979, 1982; Fekete, 1982). Williams's theoretical out-put can be traced through three rather distinct stages. The first, from 1940 to 1960, is a period in which an experiential emphasis is characteristic. As Giddens phrases it,

The road Raymond Williams has travelled in his career runs not from Eton to Wigan Pier, but from a working-class background in Pandy, on the Welsh borders, to Jesus College, Cambridge. This was his personal long revolution ... it becomes apparent how closely his writings have been bound in to his own experiences (Giddens, 1979:11).

This period is one of "crossing the border" and moving from working-class child to Cambridge intellectual. Williams identifies his position during his University days as "radical populism". A social radicalism

underlies Williams's orientation from this early time to the present (see Fekete, 1982).

Following his university studies, which were interrupted by induction into war service, Williams unsuccessfully endeavored with colleagues to launch the journal "Politics and Letters" (1947-1948). Subsequently, for ten years he isolated himself from any engagement other than his study and work as an adult educator. During this period of isolation, Williams recognized his affinity in thought with those identified as the "New Left". The works of Lukacs and Brecht became available. Williams began to reread the history of Marxist thought. It was a time of revaluation but still a retention of distance from orthodox positions. In 1957 Williams reengaged himself. He came into contact with those involved in the "Universities and Left Review Club". He joined with others in the Aldermaston Marches campaigning for disarmament.

The ten-year period of self-imposed exile -- 1948 to 1958 -- was the time when Williams worked out the ideas embodied in his books Culture and Society (1958), The Long Revolution (1961B) and Keywords (1976). Culture and Society retraces the expressive articulation of a number of English literary and intellectual thinkers since the 18th century with respect to the idea of culture. In Williams's terms,

The development of the word 'culture' is a record of a number of important and continuing reactions to these changes in our social, economic, and political life, and may be seen, in itself, as a special kind of map by means of which the nature of the changes can be explored (1958:16).

While he feels distant from the work now and is somewhat surprised at its continued reception (1979B:100), it is nevertheless a definitive study in British intellectual history. It is a pioneering work in the use of language as a special map for socio-economic transformation.

The Long Revolution began as Essays and Principles in 1959. As Williams advises,

2 The 'principles' were to be an account of the primacy of cultural production - the sense of cultural process which I had been thinking about all through writing on other people in 'Culture and Society' (1979B:133).

It was to be the empirical ground that was omitted from Culture and Society. The Long Revolution refers to the impact of democratic, industrial and cultural transformations on the individual and society in Britain.

The definitions in Keywords first began as an appendix to Culture and Society and was to provide a corrective to two accounts of language: that of Leavis and the structuralists. Williams took issue with the Leavisian account which posited language as a "continuous legacy through the ages that carries the



finest insights of the community" (1979B:177). In Williams's view the notion of a "continuous legacy" is an abstraction and hides the changes, discontinuities and divisiveness inherent in language. Williams also opposed the basic tenets of the structuralist position which does not take account of historical transformations or the dynamic qualities of language.

The second stage, 1961 to 1971, is a time when Williams worked periodically for Labour Party candidates. In 1965 Williams was a member of the Cambridge Left Forum and joined the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. By 1966, Williams became thoroughly disenchanted and resigned from the Labour Party. He took a leading part in formulating the May Day Manifesto (published 1967; 1968) and in outlining his social democratic position.

During this second period Williams did much substantive writing. He wrote Communications (completed 1961; published 1962); Modern Tragedy (began 1963; completed 1964; published 1966); The Country and the City (began 1965; published 1973); and Television: Technology and Cultural Form (began 1973; published 1974).

A third stage, which spans from 1971 to the present, is characterized by Williams's explicit Marxist position. He exposed himself to works not previously accessible: the writing of Lukacs, Goldmann, Adorno, Benjamin, Gramsci, and Althusser. Williams's

memorial lecture for Lucien Goldmann (1971) marks his shift to a Marxist paradigm. The publication Marxism and Literature (began 1972; published 1977) has a cubist quality juxtaposing side by side various themes central to Williams's Marxist position. Politics and Letters (1979B) is a revealing series of interviews conducted by members of the editorial board of the New Left Review. Williams is candid in conveying his ideas and feelings, his strengths and shortcomings in this comprehensive probe of his background and his works. A number of articles, which appeared over the years primarily in New Left Review, are brought together in the publication Problems in Materialism and Culture (1980C). Some of Williams's most important and clearest articulations of his Marxism are expounded in this volume. In Culture (1981C) Williams maps a sociology of culture from his developing position he identifies as cultural materialism. This is a key synthesizing work, wherein Williams draws in substantive work on drama -- largely written in the late 1940's and 1950's -- within the framework of a newly defined concept of culture as a "realized and related signifying system". Integrated in this work are various strands of Marxist ideas drawn from Lukacs, Goldmann, Gramsci, and Althusser. Together these works over the past decade have placed Williams's thought in the forefront of international Marxist discourse and contemporary cultural theory.

### Scope of the Study

This study is limited in its objective to an explication of Williams's problematic, its underlying assumptions, and to the development of a model of analysis based on Williams's sociology of culture. A structuralist strategy is adopted as a heuristic means to delineate the various epistemological, philosophical, theoretical, methodological and substantive dimensions which constitute the problematic. This strategy in itself imposes limits which are dealt with in the following chapter.

Summarily, a main limitation in this approach is the tendency to veer towards a synchronic rather than a diachronic analysis. The main value is that the dimensions which constitute Williams's problematic are viewed as a whole configuration, a "significant structure" (in Lucien Goldmann's terms) and can be treated systematically and comparatively.

The concentration, or what is brought to the fore of attention, is Williams's theorizing on culture and substantive work on drama. The guiding reason in the selection has been the original reason for this project, and that is ultimately, to develop a framework for the analysis of cultural forms, and in particular, the analysis of the indigenous Canadian cultural form of sound drama. As I have indicated these materials condition this inquiry to some extent and the questions I ask of Williams's work.

For practical reasons the scope of this thesis remains largely within the parameters that Williams adheres to. Firstly, Williams's own line of inquiry is followed. This implicates the British cultural theorists such as Eliot, Richards and Leavis as well as such continental Marxists as Lukacs, Gramsci and Goldmann. Secondly, in the development of a hypothetical model for cultural analysis, Williams's underlying assumptions on the production of culture are accepted. The mode of production is appropriate in the analysis of cultural products. The limits and the possibilities of the model are clarified as the theory is considered in view of a practice (i.e. the CBC radio dramas). The application of the model to the practice is not developed in this work but is a direction for further study.

This thesis, largely devoted to the delimitation of the dimensions of Williams's problematic and the development of a hypothetical model of analysis derived from such a problematic, is conceived as a first step towards a comprehensive explanation and understanding of the work of Raymond Williams.

#### Significance of the Study

This study is important in a number of ways. It is an in-depth and systematic contribution to the critical discourse of Williams's works. The basis for comparative studies of the growing number of cultural

theorists, competing perspectives and formulations is laid. This study also contributes to the development of a model of analysis for cultural forms. The model provides the basis for a movement away from a general theoretical orientation to more definitive and empirical analyses.

Williams's contribution to the analysis of culture is clarified. The study reveals a basic contradiction in Williams's thought. Despite his life-long efforts at resolving false dualisms, contradictions persist in Williams's problematic. There are a number of different but related points. First, in his efforts towards dualist resolution, Williams's tendency to forge a culture/material fusion goes too far. Not all dualities are resolvable. At the level of the materialist dimension of Williams's epistemology, there remain unresolved methodological problems with respect to the unity of the natural sciences and the human cultural sciences. The degree of objectivity attainable in natural science research is not possible in the realm of the human cultural sciences. The objects of research differ; the interests of research differ; methodology and results differ. Williams does not address these differences. Secondly, though Williams moves from the controlling concept of culture "as a whole way of life" to culture "as a realized and related signifying system", here too there are serious methodological problems. For the most part his

concepts are orienting and not definitive ones. They are general and vague. They point the way, but the way cannot yet be traversed. Thirdly, Williams provides no method or strategy for the internal analysis of the forms of culture. And fourthly, though Williams has refined his controlling concept of culture and has incorporated the notion of mediating and relative autonomous levels of practices, his notion of culture is a systemic one. Culture as "system" connotes quietistic and stasis implications that are in contradistinction to Williams's own interests.

Finally, this work aims towards the clarification and development of Williams's very special contribution to the study of culture.

## NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, this section draws on Johnson, 1979.
2. During the time of the Second International (1889-1914), Kolakowski makes the point that, "The influence of Marxism was least strong in Britain, the country in which its basic doctrine had been formulated: British socialism owed far more of its character to the ideas of Owen, Bentham and J.S. Mill. In Europe generally, to be a socialist was not necessarily to be a Marxist, but, except in Britain, socialist theory was in general the work of men who called themselves Marxists, though each understood the term in his own way (1978:1).
3. As Kolakowski notes, "British socialism ... was hardly affected by Marxian doctrine. Strictly speaking, there is nothing in the ideological basis of Fabianism that can be called specifically Marxist. 'Fabian Essays in Socialism' (1899), which struck the keynote of British socialism for generations to come, comprised a programme of reform which was either contrary to Marxist theory or rooted in principles drawn from the general arsenal of nineteenth-century socialism. The Fabians were not interested in social philosophy unless it was directly related to feasible reforms. ... It would seem that in the course of time the idea of rational, scientific social organization and economic efficiency came to loom larger in Fabian ideology, at the expense of democratic values. Despite the great importance of the British movement in the history of socialism, it made no significant contribution at this time to the evolution of Marxist doctrine, except of course for the British role in the formation of European revisionism (1978:14).
4. See New Left Review, No. 1 (1960) where both Hoggart and Williams comment on their lack of contact when their first important books were published (1957-8), yet the coincidental similarity of their concerns and ideas.
5. Work along this line is at a beginning stage. See the comparative study of Althusser and Levi-Strauss (Glucksmann, 1974) and the most recent one on Mary Douglas, Peter Berger, Michel Foucault, and Jurgen Habermas (Wuthnow et al, 1984). Wuthnow et al begin an interdisciplinary comparative study towards the development of a synthetic framework of cultural

analysis. Their approach is limited with respect to drawing out underlying premises.

6. See Bryant (1982).



Chapter 2  
Issues in the Critical  
Literature and  
Research Strategy

Critical Literature

... - crossing academic boundaries and  
confounding disciplinary expectations...  
(Williams, 1979B:7).

An enigma has surrounded the literature critical of Williams's work. Until the late 1970's there was simply a lack of scholarly debate.<sup>1</sup> Individual works claimed a large readership and each publication stimulated a number of critical reviews. Yet a systematic in-depth scholarly critique and debate was missing.

As recently as 1979, the editors of the New Left Review attest to this void and account for it by pointing out that, the "immense variety of Williams's writing, crossing academic boundaries and confounding disciplinary expectations has no doubt been one of the reasons for this hostile quiet" (1979B:7). It is interesting in this connection that Williams, as noted earlier, was in retreat and isolation for a period of ten years prior to the publication of his first major book, Culture and Society (1958). He was in contact neither with Richard Hoggart nor E.P. Thompson who were working at the same time on their first publications on

related topics of British culture. Williams's second publication, The Long Revolution (1961B), was met with hostility from people both on the left and the right (1979B:133). Whatever the reasons, it has taken some twenty years for Williams's cumulative efforts to take effect and gain recognition, for him to develop an explicit Marxist position, and for scholarly debate to begin.

Terry Eagleton (1976A, 1976B, 1978) initiated the polemic that is now underway. Together with Eagleton's critique, the publication of Marxism and Literature (1978C) and the volume of interviews, Politics and Letters (1979B), did much to put Williams's thinking at the center of international Marxist discourse on contemporary cultural concerns.

Among the accolades are such statements as J.P. Ward's who writes,

Raymond Williams, the railway signalman's son from the Welsh village of Pandy has become the most eminent humanist writer on the theory of internal relations of the concept 'culture' that contemporary society has ever produced (1981:1).

The editors of the New Left Review hail Williams's work as, "the most substantial and original achievement by any socialist writer in Britain since the war" (1976:1). Anderson echoes this by remarking, "Perhaps the most distinguished socialist thinker to have so far come from the ranks of the Western working class itself

has been a Briton, Raymond Williams" (1979:105). And his severest critic and former pupil, Terry Eagleton, acknowledges Williams as "the leading British cultural theorist of the century" (1981:59).

On balance, Eagleton's strident criticisms echo two earlier analyses, one by Victor Kiernan (1959), and one by E.P. Thompson (1961).<sup>2</sup> All acknowledge Williams's important contribution and point out issues of contention. Both Victor Kiernan and E.P. Thompson are historians within the so-called "New Left". At the base of their critique is Williams's questionable materialist grounding. Williams had not yet extricated himself from the literary - cultural tradition and its idealist implications.

Kiernan's review of Culture and Society (1959) contests the fact that Williams does not attend sufficiently to the social context (see also Thompson, 1961:25). In the parade of the intelligenstia that Williams presents, Kiernan asserts that,

To be seen in the round, and understood in its real bearings, a pattern of ideas must be seen taking shape in the minds of members of a determinate social group in a specific epoch ... Nevertheless a procession of individuals does not add up to a class. We are not shown the literati in their social setting, as a congeries of clans and corporations with specific functions and specific links and points of contact with other classes... As a result these writers have somewhat the style of disembodied intelligences, spirit-voices addressing us through the lips of a medium (1959:78).

It is true that Williams does not provide the formative background of those who "speak" to us from the literary tradition. Nor does Williams provide an adequate background of the Industrial Revolution (Kiernan, 1959:77). Facts about the Industrial Revolution are missing. Aside from descriptions "-- something to be taken for granted, a backcloth strung across his stage with a rough charcoaling of grimy mills and smoky stacks" (Kiernan, 1959:76), Williams is silent about the conditions of the social life and the social effects. A backcloth is not sufficient for the development of the social context.

Missing too, as Kiernan notes, is an explication on the development of Capitalism. Kiernan makes the point that the ills of society are not a consequence of Industrialization alone. In Williams's presentation Capitalism and Industrialization tend to merge. The notion in Culture and Society, Kiernan asserts, that Industrialization is new, negative and solely responsible for the ills of modern society is the impression that is foremost. This is simply faulty in historical fact. Kiernan emphasizes that Culture and Society lacks sufficient development and delineation of Industrialization and its effects and relation to culture.

Williams's decision to limit his inquiry to the British tradition also has serious consequences for his work, as Kiernan further points out. Williams did not

find the orthodox Marxist positions at the time of his study adequate to explain the many forces he felt impinged and were responsible for the conditions that prevailed in Britain after World War Two. In consequence, in this phase of his work, not only does Williams omit economic relations but also the idea of the state and power relations. Nor is the question of British nationalism and imperialism part of Williams's discussion (Kiernan, 1959:8; see also Thompson, 1961). In Kiernan's view, Williams "has written a fascinating and important book remarkably well stored with good things" (1959:75). His critique points to serious omissions.

In my view the omissions are part of Williams's process of abstraction and are rooted in his epistemology. The process of abstraction -- what Williams deems important and significant to include or exclude -- is an aspect of the mode of knowing. At this point in Williams's study, he is influenced largely by the intellectual formations of the literary tradition and it is true that he has not moved entirely from its idealist bias. The value of Kiernan's critique lies in his elucidation of the issues which indicate this tendency in Williams's work.

Thompson's (1961) evaluation of Culture and Society largely concurs with Kiernan's. Looking at Culture and Society as well as The Long Revolution Thompson brings out a number of additional features.

While Thompson accedes that Williams "...is our best man" (1961:24), he finds his influence limited as a "... consequence of his own partial disengagement from the socialist intellectual tradition" (1961:24). Here Thompson is pointing at Williams's materialist stance. Williams does not accept a strict economic determinist doctrine. In detail, Thompson elucidates the following issues.

He finds that Williams's talisman in these early works, "culture as a whole way of life", carries with it the implication that "way of life" equals "culture". If so, in Thompson's view, culture then equals society. How easy, Thompson says, it is to slip from "way of life" to "style of life" in the vocabulary of T.S. Eliot.

He also finds that Eliot's ghost continues to haunt Williams (1961:32). A religious aura surrounds the ghost of Eliot. The "whole way of life" loses its focus on human agency and activity, on active processes. Thompson proposes that here is a loss of perspective on problems of power and conflict. Rather than "whole way of life" Thompson advises the terms "whole way of growth" -- or better still -- "way of conflict or struggle".

Thompson further says that the target of The Long Revolution is not clearly identified. Williams does not argue against classes, institutions, people, ideas, but against social forms of the old society, of systems, of

patterns. This is all too general and, again, part of Williams's abstractive habit.

Thompson asserts that Williams's concepts are abstract and generalized. They tend to mask issues of conflict. For example, Williams uses the terms "system of decision" for politics and "system of maintenance" for economics. These terms are misleading and do not alter the underlying reality of social relations in a capitalist society. The terms appear to hide the relations of "power, property, and exploitation". In addition to systems of "decision" and of "maintenance" Williams posits systems of "communication" and of "family". He impels us to look at four supposedly co-equal systems. By Williams positing four co-equal systems, no one system has priority (Thompson, 1961:31). Williams does not hold the view that the economy is the determining system. Implied in Thompson's critique is the lack of an abrasive edge in Williams's formulations.

Also in Thompson's view, Williams "never comes to terms with the problem of ideology" (1961:35). For Williams the central problem of society is not power but communication. For Thompson, communication without its linkages to "the powers that be" is a "new reductionism".

Both Kiernan and Thompson raise these issues which are important to consider in Williams's work. Their critique is levied at Williams's first two major

publications. Some of the issues are corrected by Williams. Kiernan's and Thompson's approach to Williams comes from both their respective historical perspective and political and ideological positions within the New Left. Anathema to this Marxist historical position are abstractive and reductive habits.

The abstractive habit elucidated by both Kiernan and Thompson has its roots in the idealist epistemology that Williams inherits from British literary thought. Williams's early works can be faulted here. But Williams can no longer be taken to task for a lack of attention to a number of these points. With regard to the lack of context, if anything, providing the historical and background connections is now a hallmark of Williams's work. No longer can Williams be accused of leaving Marx aside or dealing with Marxist thought obliquely. Indeed, his works can now be questioned just because he accepts unquestioningly some of the Marxist categories or assumptions. Further, Williams's incorporation of the notion of hegemony in his work Marxism and Literature (1977C) attests to the fact that he does not ignore questions of the state, power, or domination, at least programmatically.

On the other hand, the question of determination, one that Thompson raises, is persistent as a problem for Williams. In his efforts to recognize the full complexity of social organization, there is a tendency in Williams's writing to miss the importance of causal



hierarchies. For example, Williams has tended "... to overlook the fact that economic production permits cultural production in a way which is not symmetrically true of the relation of cultural production to economic production". (Williams, 1979B:351). Williams's movement, away from the notion of "culture as a whole way of life", is his recognition of the lack of the cutting edge in his problematic. Eliot's "ghost" is long laid to rest, but some contradictions persist. Williams moves away from the idea of four co-equal systems of "maintenance, of decisions, of communication, and of family" to an all-embracing concept of culture "as a realized and related signifying system". The idea of system or systems -- open or closed -- is associated with balance, homeostasis, equilibrium. Conflict, contradictions tend to be cancelled out. And so where is the cutting edge now?

It is to Eagleton's credit that he challenges some of these notions and presuppositions of Williams's thought (1976A, 1976B, 1978). However, Eagleton's critique cannot be accepted or rejected out of hand; further consideration is required. Eagleton admits that when Williams began writing in the 1950's the discourse available was a throwback to the "...ethos thirties criticism, compounded as it was of vulgar Marxism, bourgeois empiricism and Romantic idealism", and, "could yield him [Williams] almost nothing..." (1976B:21). Nevertheless, Eagleton takes issue with

Williams's work in an all-out attack on Williams's use of language and style, his epistemological idealism and phenomenological base. He takes issue with Williams's political stance which he characterizes variously as "social humanist," "labourist," "left-Leavisianist," "conservative radical," "gradualist" and "romantic populist".

Like Kiernan and Thompson, Eagleton finds that some of the problems centre on Williams's abstractions and generalizations. As Thompson put it, Williams's language is "the language of the academy": too solemn, too reverent, too gentlemanly. Thompson says that Williams shows no anger or malice as he listens in Culture and Society to the voices of "The Tradition". Another problem in Williams's style is his density. In Thompson's view, this density of style comes from Williams's

determination to de-personalise social forces and at the same time avoid certain terms and formulations which might associate him with a simplified version of the class struggle he rightly believes to be discredited (1961:26).

Whereas Kiernan and Thompson point to Williams's characteristic language use and the implications in and of themselves, Eagleton faults the subjective underpinnings which he feels the language and style mask. The abstractive habit, the mesh of generalities, the ponderous pauses, the rhetorical inflections characteristic of Williams's writing can be faulted as

"the inert language of academicism" (Eagleton, 1976B: 23). What Eagleton does though is to personalize these features as Williams's idiosyncratic voice, as personal eccentricity, or as an "ego-ride".

It is necessary to realize the platform from which Eagleton launches his polemic. His stance is an anti-humanist structuralist one, drawing as he does on the Althusserian problematic. As such it is particularly antithetical to any suggestion of an experiential paradigm, of a phenomenological dimension, a social humanism, and any Hegelian or Lukacsian link. Eagleton's aim is to lay the basis for a "scientific" approach to cultural aesthetics. It is characteristic of those who espouse the anti-humanistic structuralist problematic to deny individual lived experiences. No blood is to flow in the structuralist's veins. Otherwise how are we to attain scientific objectivity? The basis of Williams's problematic in the experiential modality is thus rejected.

The crux of Eagleton's argument though locates the block in Williams's thought in his political thought; his populism.<sup>3</sup> In Eagleton's view the base of Williams's contradictions or dualities lies in his populism. Answering the charges of Eagleton's challenge, Barnett counters. He says, "A less conventional populist is hard to imagine" (Barnett, 1976:50). In his early work Culture and Society, Williams criticized populist ideas of pop culture

(1958:307). The hallmark of his work The Country and the City (1973A) is precisely the dispelling of myths equally about country folk and city folk. His empathy with working people hardly merits the label of populist.

Eagleton also labels Williams's politics as "labourist".<sup>4</sup> He means it in a pejorative sense. Yet as Barnett claims, Williams has been a vocal critic of the labour party and "has made a more balanced and judicious assessment of the labour movement than Eagleton" (Barnett, 1976:51).

Further, Eagleton takes Williams to task for the "reformism" or "gradualism" of his political stance. This is true: Williams advocates a "long revolution". He continues to search for alternatives within existing structures. Barnett counters this by saying "should we not congratulate Williams for this honest and serious approach?" (Barnett, 1976:50). It is rather easy to be the armchair critic. It is true that we don't see Eagleton leading the troops to revolution. It is also true that Williams's examination of revolution (i.e. Modern Tragedy, 1966D) is among his most provocative and original analyses. He is serious about the urgent need for societal transformation. To fault Williams for his reformist inclinations and lack of revolutionary fervour is to devalue the strength of his contribution to both theory and political practice (his praxis).

Eagleton's pronouncements on Williams's epistemology are also penetrating. In Eagleton's view it is an idealist epistemology with an experiential anchor. Williams's central concepts, culture as a "whole way of life"; "structure of feeling"; and "the community" as the locus for shared beliefs and attitudes attest to the idealist thrust. The validity of this critique of Eagleton's is based on Williams's early works before he engaged the Marxist categories. Eagleton only allows himself a short nod to the Marxist reformulations of the late 1970's.

Eagleton treats each book by itself in isolation from the others. Text analysis, on the other hand, moves across the single work to examine works as a single text. Taking account of Williams's writings as a unified text does not suit Eagleton's purpose. A book-by-book critique, does not do justice to Williams's oeuvre, his life work. By examining Williams's work in a piece-meal fashion, Eagleton loses the balance, the flow, the development. It negates Williams's cumulative and integrative accomplishment.

In general Barnett counters Eagleton's polemic with a more balanced view. For Barnett, however, the problem is not Williams's "populism" but his "culturalism". By culturalism, Barnett means "a strategic vision of socialist politics in its way parallel to that of economics" (1976:56). Culturalism implies that it is the cultural realm that is determining and

not the economic.

In this thesis I will argue that the contradictions, antimonies and dualities that are a feature of Williams's style of thought are located neither in his "populism" -- radical or not -- nor in his "culturalism", but in his epistemology. Williams's problematic, as schematized in the following, is a particular configuration of epistemology, philosophic research-guiding interests, methodological approaches, as well as theoretical conceptual formulations which Williams identifies as "cultural materialism".

Williams's epistemology embraces both idealist/realist and idealist/empiricist modes of knowing. As in the Hegelian Marxist view, both the subjective and objective are combined in a complex, dynamic totality. Comprehended in this totality are both the natural and physical sciences and the human and cultural sciences. By adopting a totalistic stance, Williams conjoins physical or empirical sciences and the human and cultural sciences by fiat. He thus obliterates necessary distinctions or real differences. This is a dimension of his thought that is the root of the antimonies in his problematic despite his sincere and life-long efforts to overcome all dualities.

Philosophically, it is not surprising that Williams acknowledges a proclivity with Lukacs and Gramsci. Williams's overall philosophic vision is a meliorative one as compared to a pessimistic or tragic

vision. His is a humanist stance whereby he maintains that human intention, critique, effort and action will effect social transformation and attain the emancipatory thrust for humankind. The concept of totality has the greatest affinity with that of Lukacs and Gramsci and the orientation of a number of representatives of the Frankfurt School. In a general sense those identified with this critical theory share a social philosophy which seeks to unite theory and practice; which seeks to examine the essence of society by probing the underlying structures and their relations; and by way of gradual social transformation to effect human emancipation.

In keeping with the totality, Williams's methodology is characterized by his historical approach. This is the most persistent feature of his oeuvre. Each critical piece of work, no matter whether short talk, essay or book-length is marked by historical definition. The historical insight afforded by this methodology is Williams's hallmark. The creativity, fluidity and dynamism of signification are restored by way of Williams's historical etymological study and definition. However definitions alone are sterile (see Thompson, 1961:30). The trick is to move from a definitional strategy to evidence and then to theory and practice in continuous oscillation. There is evidence of this tendency in Williams's style of thought. He constantly reworks earlier definitions,

concepts and substantive data and brings them in centripetal fashion into the currency of his thought. The historical thrust is to bring the past, present and future together in a holistic configuration.

In Williams's view history and structure are both moments of the totality. However there is a tendency in Williams's thinking towards historicism whereby the historical embraces the structural. But unlike structuralist thinking that is represented by Levi-Straus or Althusser, the "human co-efficient" is primary. It is human thought, action and reaction, human creation and de-creation, human structuring and de-structuring, man alive and in "commotion" that is central.

Williams's theoretical position, "cultural materialism", is in keeping with his philosophic vision of the whole. The recent turn to the controlling concept culture, "as a related and signifying system" is a move away from the totalizing definition of culture "as a whole way of life". Williams has sought levels of mediation to break the totalization of the earlier definition. With this definition, Williams creates space for language and signification as levels of practice, embedded as they are in other levels of the social organization or systems: economic, political, ideological, generational, etc. However, the concept of "culture" as "system" -- whether signifying, economic, political, ideological or



whatever -- requires examination. The systemic implies organization, balance, and homeostasis. While the levels mediate the totality of the system, the potential for critique is blunted. Is there no primary determination? Can contradiction and conflict be accounted for within the system? Is this necessary or even desirable? What are the political implications?

These are some basic questions which Williams's problematic raises and to which this thesis is directed. The main thesis argument is located at the level of Williams's epistemology. It rests on a number of related propositions: that, despite Williams's efforts at the resolution of false dualisms, Williams posits a false holism; that, there remains a basic contradiction between the physical and human sciences which Williams has not overcome; that, epistemological distinctions within a total ontology need to be maintained.

#### Research Strategy

The analysis to follow draws on the research strategy of Miriam Glucksmann (1974). The emphasis is on a structural and internal analysis of a "thought style", or "problematic".<sup>5</sup> The idea of a "thought style", "thought structure", or "problematic" is used interchangeably. In Glucksmann's terms,

a problematic or a thought style is a particular way of looking at the world, defined by the fundamental questions asked,

and which includes concepts, methods and theories. To isolate a problematic requires more than a simple reading of the texts, but depends on making explicit concepts that are often only latent, and investigating their interrelationship with a total system (1974:8).

Williams's problematic includes his particular mode of knowing, his way of looking at the world or philosophy, his concepts, theories and methods. These various elements of his problematic are conceived as different dimensions, levels, or layerings of his thought. More specifically and characteristically, the dimensions to be discerned include:

(1) epistemology: theory of knowledge and how it is to be acquired. Views on what sort of knowing of the social world we can hope to achieve.

(2) philosophy: substantive and generalized world view, which incorporates certain values and puts limitations on the substantive theoretical postulates which also form part of the system.

(3) theory: substantive hypotheses to account for and explain observed facts, phenomena and events.

(4) methodology: lower level prescriptions as to the methods to be used in research e.g. hypothetic - deductive method, subjectivism.

(5) description, or field of study, actual method of describing observations.  
(Glucksmann, 1974:10).

These five levels of a problematic are used as a guide to study Williams's texts as a whole. They serve as a heuristic tool. The levels do not refer to a determined hierarchy but to descending levels of

abstraction. These constitutive levels, though they can be identified as separate for purposes of analysis, relate to each other in some determinant fashion. The relations among the levels are not predetermined or the same for each thought structure. This is a question to be determined in the course of examination. Not each level in a particular problematic carries the same import or weight. Again, this is a question to be determined.

The main advantage of examining a problematic in this morphological fashion is that it facilitates comparative and interdisciplinary analyses. The probe of different levels of a thought style opens up the possibility of comparison along the various dimensions. For example, Glucksmann points out that on the level of epistemology there is great similarity in the problematics of Levi-Strauss and Althusser (1974:162). Both uphold an anti-empiricist stance to social reality. Both tend towards the development of "adequate" concepts as the means to reality. Both hold to an anti-historicist perspective whereby structure has primacy over history. The central concept in both is structure. For both it is the internal layers, levels, weightings of a structure that is the object of study along with structural causality. It is structures and relations that are real.

It is on the philosophic level where Levi-Strauss and Althusser differ most. Levi-Strauss veers towards

both idealism and psychologism. In his thought style, social change has to take into account apriori structures of mankind's physiological makeup. He makes a claim as a materialist, but his structures are not rooted in a materialist base. Althusser, on the other hand, is a materialist. For him, Marxist structures are tied to the materialist base, while social formations and transformations are determined "in the last instance" by the economy. There is a revolutionary thrust to Althusser's program. Philosophy and political action are to be intertwined with the aim of social transformation.

This kind of analysis permits one to say in which ways theories are different or approach each other. It moves away from an all-or-nothing approach. Rather than to simplistically label Althusser and Levi-Strauss as structuralists, or not, we can begin to say with more precision what the similarities or differences are.

In the case of Williams, an analysis of his problematic along these lines will provide an approach towards explanatory analyses of his works as a whole, as "text". Further, it opens up possibilities of comparison. For example, Williams's problematic and Lucien Goldmann's approximate in a number of respects. A comparative analysis along these dimensions would permit specification. A further contrast along these lines with other contemporary cultural critics from

competing problematics such as Jurgen Habermas and Michel Foucault would be instructive and important in the development of the field.

There is a number of problems inherent in a structural approach. Glucksmann draws on structural theory to analyze two thinkers, Levi-Strauss and Althusser. They are part of the structuralist mode of thought. A structuralist analysis is used to analyze structuralist thinkers. There is a danger here of solipsism. The theoretical framework tends to merge with the substance to be analyzed. This problem is less of a danger in this thesis. Williams's thinking is rooted in a very different frame.

Glucksmann raises another important question: "How is it that the levels of a theoretical framework can be dissociated from each other, as may be the case with epistemology and philosophy for Althusser and Levi-Strauss? This question carries the implication that the analytic separation of levels may distort the problematic. There is no ready solution for this problem.

How the various levels are to be identified or delimited is another concern. Glucksmann provides a short description of the characteristics of each level. This is sufficient as an orienting guide and can be further developed in relation to the empirical study of a thought structure.

This approach also carries with it the problems

inherent in structural analyses more generally. There is the tendency to see structure as overriding all else. There is the tendency to reify structure, to close structure, such that it is only the internal relations that are significant. Structures become rigid and static and lose the motion and dynamism of the structuring and destructuring process. Here Lucien Goldmann's thinking is a corrective. He posits the idea that both genesis and structure are moments of a dialectic whole. The metaphor that comes closest is that of watching a motion picture or video. The diachronic movement of the film is flowing, dynamic, multidimensional. At any one point we can stop the flow, analyze a "still", -- the synchronic -- go backwards, forwards and continue the diachronic movement.

Glucksmann is also emphatically against the tendency to reify structures. She writes, that,

The primacy of morphological analysis is implicit in the notion of a problematic. But this is not intended as a substitute for other possible types of analysis: historical, that is, the development of the problematic and the origin of each of its elements; sociological: examination of the external, especially social, referents of the theory, and how it is located within the social structure; or an evaluation of its validity. Morphological analysis has a more limited aim than these, merely to establish a morphology. Any attempt at a "total" explanation would have to combine all three of these aspects (1974:9).

There is no iron law of necessity to cease analysis when the synchronic moment is over.

This thesis has the more limited aim of a morphological analysis. The value lies in the systematic or organized explanation of Williams's thinking in various epistemological, philosophical, theoretical, conceptual, and methodological dimensions. The problems or limits of each level become clear. Possibilities for specific comparison and contrast are opened up. While it is desirable to attempt a "total" explanation which would combine structural, historical, and sociological study, such scope is beyond this thesis. A morphological study is preliminary to either historical or sociological development.

Once again Goldmann's work is relevant. From his standpoint, the first step in a sociological analysis of a work, whether it is a literary, artistic, or philosophical one, is an analysis of the "significant structure". But Goldmann leaves us with the problem of the delimitation of the "significant structure" of a work. Glucksmann provides the parameters for such an analysis. Following Glucksmann, once the structural or morphological analysis is completed, the outcome is the guide to the structures within which the work is embedded. This is the movement of understanding a work. Henceforth, there is a process of continuous oscillation between the structures of a work and the mental structures of a social group within which it is

inserted. Goldman's Genetic-Structuralist approach comprehends both explanation and understanding as desirable modes for a full inquiry. This structural-morphological study of Williams's text is to be taken as the first approximation.

The reader will find in the following chapter the further beginnings of the oscillation movement to the social referents outside of Williams's works. It is not simply a "backcloth" of social contents that is the aim, but the development of social contexts that are integrally related to Williams's problematic. In Williams's case, as suggested earlier, his life experiences and his life works are intertwined. It is to the experiential ground of Williams's problematic that I turn to now.



## NOTES

1. See 1979B: Foreward; pp. 7-10.
2. Kiernan (1959) reviews Culture and Society (1958) and Thompson (1961) reviews both Culture and Society (1958) and The Long Revolution (1961).
3. See Williams's position on "Populism" is an implicit rejoinder to Eagleton. The rhetoric of the term is tied to complexity and alteration. While Williams rejects the populism of the right which has come to be, he continues to respect the idea of populism as "a mobilization of the existing resources of 'the people' against a nature or alein ruling class" (1980C:239-243).
4. Williams's break with the Labour Party signals what he came to reject "as reformist", or "labourist". He says, "I made my own final break from one kind of reformism - a strong and active reformism of the majority of the British Labour movement - in 1966, when the long-looked for condition of a large Labour parliamentary majority ... turned very rapidly, into the opposite of what had been generally foreseen: not into social democracy, or into reformism, but into an actual and necessary agency of the mutation of capitalism by the representative incorporation of the working class" (1980C:249).
5. For the purposes of this work, the idea of "problematic" approaches that of the Kuhnian idea of "paradigm". It differs most at the level of generality. For example a Marxian "paradigm" may constitute a number of different "problematics".
6. I place the term sociology here in italics to denote Glucksmann's special use. It is evident that Glucksmann's idea of sociology here is a very narrow one as is, for that matter, the historical. For her the sociological means the "examination of the external, especially social, referents of the theory, and how it is located within the social structure; or an evaluation of its validity" (1974:9).  
 My own position with respect to sociology is best articulated by Wolff. She writes, "It is fairly common to read dismissive comments on sociology... I do not see why we need to be apologetic or defensive about using the term 'sociology'. It does not necessarily align us with work which goes under the same name which we might

consider trivial, or limited or ideological (in the sense of not recognizing, or denying, its own particular stance and background of interests). Historical materialism is amongst other things, the study of society, and it is with this meaning that I intend the term "sociology..." (1981:6).

### Chapter 3

#### Place and Politics: Conditions of a Dualist Vision

The conditions which form and inform Williams's problematic are rooted in his socio-cultural base: railway working class son and Cambridge intellectual elite; country and city; chapel and church; Wales and England; and in a most intimate way, the character of his father.<sup>1</sup> In a number of his works, Williams points out the influence of his formative experiences on his thought development. To illustrate this point a number of salient examples are quoted. In the first and seminal work Culture and Society (1958), Williams concludes with the "idea of community". Writing about the working-class ethic vis-a-vis the middle-class ethic and the idea of service, he says,

I was not trained to this ethic; [the service ethic] and when I encountered it, in late adolescence, I had to spend a lot of time trying to understand it, through men whom I respected and who had been formed by it. The criticism I now make of it is in this kind of good faith. It seems to me inadequate because in practice it serves, at every level, to maintain and confirm the 'status quo'. This was wrong, for me, because the 'status quo' in practice, was a denial of equity to the men and women among whom I had grown up, the lower servants, whose lives were governed by the existing distributions of property, numeration, education, and respect. The real personal unselfishness, which ratified the description as service, seemed to me to exist within a larger selfishness, which was only not seen because it was idealized as the necessary form of a civilization, or rationalized as a natural distribution corresponding to worth, effort,

and intelligence. I could not share these versions, because I thought, and still think, that the sense of injustice which the 'lower servants' felt was real and justified. One cannot in conscience then become, when invited, an upper servant in an establishment that one thus radically disapproves (1958:315).

This passage depicts the felt and perceived class divisions and the injustices that provoke Williams's thought and action.

In The Country and the City (1973A), Williams writes to dispel the reified versions that have attached themselves to rural and urban notions: the idea of country as "peace, innocence, and simple virtue"; the idea of city as "a place of noise, worldliness, ignorance, limitation" (1973:1A). He relates the problem to himself:

But it is as well to say at the outset that this has been for me a personal issue, for as long as I remember. It happened that in a predominantly urban and industrial Britain I was born in a remote village, in a very old settled countryside, on the border between England and Wales. Within twenty miles, indeed at the end of the bus route, was in one direction an old cathedral city, in the other an old frontier market town but only a few miles beyond it the first industrial towns and villages of the great coal and steel area of South Wales. Before I had read any descriptions and interpretations of the changes and variations of settlements and ways of life, I saw them on the ground, and working, in unforgettable clarity. In the course of education I moved to another city, built round a university, and since then, living and travelling and working, I have come to visit, and to need to visit, so many great cities, of different kinds, and to look forward and back, in space and time, knowing and seeking to know this relationship, as an

experience and as a problem. I have written about it in other ways but also I have been slowly collecting the evidence to write about it explicitly, as a matter of social, literary and intellectual history (1973A:3).

I quote this passage at length because it leaves no doubt that Williams's birth and life, birth place and life space in country and in city, in farm milieu and university milieu, as working-class and intellectual, structure his perception, his consciousness, constitute his research guiding interests, and weigh on his selection of problems and judgements. As Williams moves from this experiential ground to reformulate his thinking along Marxist lines he continues to acknowledge these roots. Writing in the introduction to Marxism and Literature (1977C) he says,

One way of making clear my sense of the situation from which this book begins is to describe, briefly, the development of my own position, in relation to Marxism and to literature, which, between them, in practice as much as in theory, have preoccupied most of my working life. My first contacts with Marxist literary argument occurred when I came to Cambridge to read English in 1939: not in the Faculty but in widespread student discussion. I was already relatively familiar with Marxist, or at least socialist and communist, political and economic analysis and argument. My experience of growing up in a working-class family had led me to accept the basic political position which they supported and clarified. The cultural and literary arguments, as I then encountered them, were in effect an extension from this, or a mode of affiliation to it (1977C:1).

This is Williams's own account of the influence from

his lived experiences.

Place: Pandy and Cambridge

Pandy:...under the Black Mountains, on the Welsh border, where the meadows are bright green against the red earth of the ploughland, and the first trees, beyond the window, are oak and holly ... Cambridge in the east now, at nights, over the field with the elms and the white horse, I watch the glow of Cambridge: a white tinged with orange... a gate, an entry, and a library at the end of it: a direct record, if I could learn to read it ... But there was more to Cambridge than that. An ambivalence certainly: a university of scholars and teachers but also of coaches and placement on their way to higher places; a world of men extending human knowledge and bringing light to nature and to the lives of others; a world of other men contracted in sympathy, telling their qualifying paradigms inside the walls, in an idle and arrogant observation and consumption ... but whenever I consider the relations between country and city, and between birth and learning, I find this history active and continuous: the relations are not only of ideas and experiences, but of rent and interest, of situation and power; a wider system (1973A:3-7).

The relations continue: the land, the work, the culture.

The Village of Pandy, near the border of England and Wales was a small farm service center. The railroad ran through the land and village. The base of the community were the small farm holders. Of the three to four hundred people in Pandy some fifteen to twenty family heads earned their living as railroad workers. There was one school in the village run by the Church of Wales, one church, a Baptist chapel, a Presbyterian chapel and four pubs. The dispersed

settlement pattern of Pandy is characteristic of rural Wales, unlike the nucleated pattern of Eastern England where homes circle church and spire.

For Williams, his family, as well as the larger community, Wales was considered a cultural rather than a national entity.<sup>2</sup> When Wales was incorporated into Britain it assumed a national identity. Williams recalls that, "... there was an intense and conscious pressure through the schools to eliminate the language which included punishment for children who spoke Welsh" (1979B:25). Welsh songs and poems taught in the schools were to be used for special occasions only. It was not until he was in his thirties and studied Welsh history that Williams began to work out his appreciation of the Welsh culture.

The religious orientation of Williams's family was mixed church and chapel.<sup>3</sup> The majority of the farmers in the Pandy community were nonconformist. They were affiliated more with the Baptist than the Presbyterian tradition. Williams's father was antagonistic to religion. Under his grandmother's influence Williams went to chapel (which was more oriented to Welsh) and later to church. His decision not to be confirmed did not perturb the family.

Williams's family was Socialist from his earliest years. Williams's paternal grandfather, a landless farmer, was turned out of his home and farm. He then worked as a roadman. The trauma of the experience was

enough to turn the family's political allegiance from Liberal to Labour. As Williams explains,

When you are a victim of a farmer who is liberal your class interest declares itself: at that point he went over to Labour. So this was already my father's orientation (1979B:26).

Williams's father was further radicalized after being unwillingly conscripted into World War One. After the war, his first railway job was in the mining valleys which "were very politicized with a fairly advanced Socialist culture" (1979B:26). He was secretary of the branch Labour Party and also ran the Labour Party branch in Pandy in 1919. He was politically active and was involved in the General Strike of 1926. It was a high moment for the Williams's family when Labour won in 1929. In 1936, Henry Joseph Williams was again the branch secretary of the Labour party. Williams pictures his father:

When I was born he was a signalman, in the box in the valley: part of a network reaching to known named places, Newport and Hereford, and beyond them London, but still a man in the village, with his gardens and his bees, taking produce to market on a bicycle: a different network, but it was a bicycle he went on, to a market where the farmers came in cars and the dealers in lorries: our own century. He had been as much born to the land as his own father, yet, like him, he could not live by it (1973A:4).

Williams's father is the "significant other". The internal conflicts that Williams perceives in his



father's character and behaviour, the contradictions of class, country and city provide the materials for the fictionalized versions of Williams's novels, Border Country (1960A) and The Second Generation (1964B). The dualism in the elder Williams prompts the structuration of the two novels and carries over into the non-fictionalized work. Williams attests to these connections when he writes, that the dualities had to be expressed (first in Border Country)

... if the complicated development of the life of the village was to be fully expressed. Beyond this again was the son, the observer, more specifically removed; bound to these two modes, these two figures of a father, and taking that continuing action into his work in the city.

I used the same method, of dividing and then connecting to express the internal crisis, in a novel of the city, 'Second Generation', which was essentially the same movement in a different environment ... That is how I have seen the whole problem since, in more general ways. The experience that went into the novels became the questions I put to the tradition (1973A:299).

Williams acknowledges the intertwining of life experiences, life problems and the expression on the fictionalized and non-fictionalized planes. So often, in the work and thought of others, these kinds of connections are denied or bracketed out. It is part of Williams's thought structure that the relatedness is realized and made explicit.

Another formative experience is Williams's formal education. In 1925 Williams first attended school at

the Llanfihangel Crucorney Elementary in Pandy. He won a County scholarship in 1932 to attend the King Henry VIII Grammar School of Abergavenny. In flash-back, he tells that,

It happened that the village had its golden year when I sat for the scholarship - seven pupils won County scholarships. There was a group photograph taken because it was such an exceptional event: six girls and me. But the girls - several of them were farmers' daughters - would usually go only as far as the fifth form and would then leave. The other boys from the village also went to the fifth form where they then often had difficulty in passing the matric. So by the time I got to the sixth form I was the only one from Pandy (1979B:28).

In 1936 he attained a School Certificate from the Central Welsh Board and was exempt from matriculation. He received the High School Certificate two years later with proficiency in English, French and Latin. It was in October 1939 when he entered Trinity College, Cambridge on a state scholarship. As part of the Welsh heritage,

There was absolutely nothing wrong with being bright, winning a scholarship or writing a book. I think that this has something to do with what was still a Welsh cultural tradition within an Anglicized border area. Historically, Welsh intellectuals have come in very much larger numbers from poor families than have English intellectuals, so the movement is not regarded as abnormal or eccentric. The typical Welsh intellectual is - as we say - only one generation away from shirt sleeves. There was, after all, no establishment in Wales to maintain a class-dependent intelligentsia. Class-dependent intellectuals by definition emigrated. It is important to remember that the Welsh

University Colleges were built by popular subscription in the 1880's, which would have been a difficult project in England at the time (1979B:29).

Other educational experiences were of course of a more informal nature. At home and even into the grammar school years, the main source of Williams's reading was school books. The books at home were limited to the Bible, the Beekeeper's Manual -- his father's passion -- and children's books like "The Wonder Book of Why and What" (1979B:27). Book buying was not part of the habit of the family, nor for that matter common to the majority of Britons at that time (1961B).

There was a local branch of the "Left Book Club" in Abergavenny run by Labour Party activists with about fifteen to twenty members. The Club in Abergavenny, though close to The Communist Party, was more of the Popular Front.<sup>4</sup> Though the family did not subscribe to the Book Club, Williams would borrow books from the members who did. He recalls reading books on imperialism and colonialism. Edgar Snow's book Red Star Over China, for example, was one that made him conscious of the Chinese Revolution. Meetings and discussions were also organized by the Book Club. Konni Zilliacus of the League of Nations was one of the visiting speakers who impressed Williams. To Williams and his friends, events in the international arena were felt to be more engaging and interesting than his

father's more localized interests.

Williams's youthful ambition was to be a writer. By sixteen he and his closest friend were writing and producing plays for the village audience. "We produced them in the village hall and everybody came", Williams recalls (1979B:30). He also wrote a novel Mountain Sunset about the revolution in Britain and a critical battle on the border; a novel which "within six months I couldn't bear to reread" (1979B:30).

Growing up in Pandy and in Abergavenny was rather a positive experience for Williams. Combined with high expectations for his achievement was encouragement and support, not only from his father and mother, but also from teachers and community members. The whole community turned out for his productions. On the advice of his headmaster, he was accepted into Trinity without having to go through ordinary admissions procedures. He remembers,

... for what it is worth my own estimate is that I arrived at the university with about as full an availability of energy as anyone could reasonably have. Indeed my expression of energy was unproblematic to a fault. All the problems came later. At the time, it was very much a sense of hitting Cambridge, being extraordinarily unafraid of it. I got relatively afraid of it afterwards ... but then the notion that there were deep blocking forces to contend with never occurred to me (1979B:36).

In these early formative years Williams felt relatively free of conflicts that mark many a boyhood either as a

result of family pressures and problems or derived from social cultural and/or religious positions. It was with a sense of fullness of energy, confidence and great expectations that Williams crossed the border to Cambridge.

The border as reality and as image figures largely in Williams's thought style (see Eagleton, 1976B:30). The border between Wales and England marks two distinct places, two nations each with a different history, linguistic origin, values, beliefs, attitudes, mood, and ways of seeing and doing. It is a real border with cars, rails, people and ideas crossing back and forth.

For Williams, the crossing is loaded with symbolic value. It signifies, in the least, separation and change in place, class status, life-style, and outlook. "Across the border" were times of both internal and external conflict. The war within himself as well as the outbreak of World War Two interrupted Williams's studies at Cambridge. It wasn't really a case of Williams "hitting" Cambridge, but the reverse.

Williams began at Trinity College, Cambridge in October 1939. He took the English Tripos Preliminary Examination in June 1940 and completed Part One in June 1941. He was away for war service between 1941 and 1945. In October 1945 after serving in the Royal Artillery, Williams returned to Cambridge and in June 1946 completed the English Tripos Part Two.

During the first year of formal academic work,

Williams's courses were mainly concentrated on early periods of English literature. Essentially it was a continuation of his earlier school work. Williams got along well with his tutor Lionel Elvin. Elvin, though not a Communist, was left in political orientation. This was not the case in Williams's second year. His supervisor, Tillyard, had a very different political outlook and Williams began to experience a great deal of difficulty. Williams was involved in much political activity and other kinds of writing. He found himself unprepared and could not answer to the criticism and questions coming from Tillyard. As Williams relates,

... in my academic studies I was not able to produce the properly prepared and referenced and coherent work that I knew I needed to defend my positions. I was engaged in having to satisfy somebody who was professionally teaching a subject that my ideas were tenable and reasonable, and I could not. I was continually found out in ignorance, found out in confusion (1979B:51).

This was a time of personal crisis. It was not just Tillyard, but,

There was no one in the faculty then who could have spoken to my problems. Leavis would probably have responded much more angrily to my notion of how novels should be judged, although he might have answered in terms nearer to the language of objection (1979B:52).

The experience at this time has a profound and long-lasting impact. He notes that,

The whole crisis had an important bearing on my attitude when I returned to academic work in 1945. People often ask me why I didn't carry on from the Marxist arguments of the thirties. The reason is that I felt they had led me into an impasse. I had become convinced that their answers did not meet the questions, and that I had got to be prepared to meet the professional objections, I was damned well going to do it properly this time (1979B:52).

Reflecting back, Williams recalls how totally unprepared he was for Cambridge:

I knew nothing about it. The normal process of coming to Cambridge after all is at least that you go for a preliminary interview or examination. But the university was totally strange to me when I came off the train (1979B:39).

To add to the strangeness on arrival, Williams found that no one at Trinity taught English and new arrangements had to be worked out. With courses and tutor settled Williams tried to join any activity that he thought might interest him, rugby, the student's union, but,

... when I went to the Union, which I naturally want to join, and was told that I had to be sponsored. I needed a proposer and seconder. I didn't of course know anybody to ask. They said: Haven't you got friends from school? Although a technicality, this suddenly introduced the curiosity of my position (1979B:39)..

It was here that Williams first came up against the social fabric of Cambridge.

The discomfort of these first experiences was

overcome, as Williams found his way to the Socialist Club where he found "a home away from home" (1979B:39). Along with political activity was a rich social culture. There was a club room, lunches were served and films were shown. Williams lunched at the Club as frequently as he could. It was also quite naturally a place to meet friends, Michael Orrom, for one. Orrom was a great organizer of the film showings. Later Williams and Orrom were to write Preface to Film. The club had a wall newspaper, "which was really how you got into politics - if you produced something for that" (1979B:40). And Williams did precisely that. He soon joined the Communist Party and was involved with the Writer's Group.

Williams schedule of activities included being Chairman of the University Union, editor of the university journal and of the publication Outlook. He was militant in the People's Convention. The Union chairmanship put Williams in contact with mainstream Tory students who were the majority at Cambridge. He found it challenging and exciting to be "speaking against these baying ranks of the traditional right" (1979B:47). His experience in public speaking in Wales stood him well. Much to his surprise, Williams was asked to be editor of the Cambridge University Journal, the weekly student newspaper which preceded Varsity:

That was in my third term. It was not much of a time to be an editor because it spanned



the fall of France, the Union debate over which was banned by the proctors (1979B:46).

Williams had trouble when he printed the speeches. The publication Outlook was of a different sort. It was the outlet for writers with a "consciously Socialist" bent, but not of the Party line.

The crisis of War intervened and Williams served from 1941-1945. After the war, Williams took up his "academic work fanatically" (1979B:62). Feeling that there was no time to waste now, Williams worked essentially on two subjects, Ibsen and George Eliot. For his Tripos, he wrote a fifteen thousand word thesis on Ibsen and a special paper on George Eliot. The mood in which Williams now worked was a marked change from that of his first years. As he explains,

My project of 1939-40, as I defined it to myself and tried to live it, had been confident and unproblematic. It now seemed incredibly problematic. It was in that context that certain themes in Ibsen affected me very strongly: the insistence on vocation, the concern with death, the idea that in the process of composition towards a project you accumulate from an environment that is not of your will or choice traits which frustrate the vocation. These themes were all related to my own preoccupations. I think it was from that time that a quite different personality emerged, very unlike my earlier self...I became much more qualifying and anxious and careful, always stressing complexities and difficulties - all the characteristics of which people were later to complain. They were the absolute reverse of what I was in 1940 (1979B:63).

It was in Ibsen that Williams found the closest articulation of what he was feeling. It was, "The tight place, where you stick fast; there is no going forward or backward" (1968A;1979B:62). The crisis of feeling Williams experienced in his second year at Cambridge was exacerbated by his war experiences and the political changes which were wrought. Ibsen articulated for Williams the experience of feeling at both the personal and social levels.

Though offered a senior scholarship at Trinity to continue, (the thesis leading to a doctoral degree in our system) Williams opted to take a job in adult education. Williams began to teach adult education in September, 1946. He was appointed Staff Tutor by the Oxford University Tutorial Classes Committee (a joint committee of Extra-Mural Delegacy and the W.E.A.) This was in East Sussex and he lived in Seaford. In 1960, he was offered a new post as residential tutor in Oxford. Williams married in 1942 and now had a daughter and family responsibilities along with what seemed to be exciting projects. He wanted to write a novel, a long-time desire. He was going to write a documentary film script for his friend Michel Orram and he and his friends, Wolf Mankowitz and Clifford Collins, were intending to develop a periodical and a press.

In 1947 together with Wolf Mankowitz and Clifford Collins, Williams launched the journal Politics and

Letters. The review was intended as a frontal approach to radical left politics and Leavisite literary criticism. Almost from the beginning both financial problems and personal disagreements beset the journal. The demise in 1948, just after one year of publication, was particularly painful to Williams. It prompted a ten year retreat and isolation.

By 1961 Williams was quite ready for a change and welcomed the new offer of an appointment as Lecturer in English in Cambridge, followed by election as Fellow of Jesus College. He was appointed Professor of Drama, Cambridge in 1974, a position he held until 1983, the year of his retirement.

Williams's Politics: Populist? Labourist? Communist?  
Socialist? Maverick Marxist?

On the way back, we stopped in Paris and I crept out of the hotel and went straight to the Soviet pavilion at the international Exhibition. I remember it very clearly. There was a peculiarly contemptible British pavilion with a large cardboard cut-out of Chamberlain and a fishing rod. The Soviet one had a massive sculpture of a man and a woman with a hammer and sickle on top of it. I kept saying: 'What is a sickle?' - I had used the damned thing and we called it a hook. It was there that I bought a copy of the 'Communist Manifesto' and read Marx for the first time (1979B:37).

This was Williams's introduction to Marx in 1937 at the age of 16. He had won a Welsh League of Nations scholarship to attend the Youth Conference in Geneva where he reported on the international situation.

We recall the socialist and labourist bent of Williams's family: growing up in a working class environment; Williams's father as a role model had been active in the Labour party; the jubilation in the family when Labour won in 1929; and Williams's exposure to literature of the "left" via books, discussions and meetings planned by the Left Book Club in Abergavenny. The socialist position became fully articulated and developed over the years as Williams worked through the set of problems of culture and society.

At Cambridge (1939-1941) Williams joined the Socialist Club and the Communist Party. For the club, the central points of reference were Engel's "Socialism-Scientific and Utopian", "Anti Durhing", the "History of the CPSU", "Short Course" and Lenin's "State and Revolution". During these university years, Williams identified his position as radical populism. He says,

What I learned from, and shared with, the dominant tones of that English Marxist argument was what I would now call, still with respect, a radical populism. It was an active, committed popular tendency, concerned rather more (and to its advantage) with making literature than with judging it, and concerned above all to relate active literature to the lives of the majority of our own people (1977C:2).

When Williams joined the Communist Party in October 1939, he recalls that,

It did not seem to me a political step into something new ... It was rather ... a financial commitment rather than a programmatic leap (1979B:41,42).

Williams remembers with some amusement how he got to join. On one occasion at a meeting where he was enjoying himself he addressed the speaker:

... I had to get up and ask how to join the club. I said characteristically: 'Is this the only organization on the left, because I want to be the reddest of the reds?' (1979B:41).

The remark was met with a silent glare, but Williams's membership was accepted. At this time, the disjunction between the Communist Party as a revolutionary party and Labour Party as reformist did not particularly disturb Williams. The main difference in his perception between the two was that the Communist Party was a more disciplined organization.

In joining the Communist Party, Williams was placed with a group who were in the English faculty. People were grouped according to their interests and Williams was placed with the "Writer's Group". One of the tasks assigned to Williams, for example, was to write a pamphlet with Eric Hobsbawm on the Russo-Finnish War. Discussions among the "Writer's Group" centered largely on problems of literature. One of the debates concerned Ralph Fox's, "The Novel of the People". Alick West's work and the Left Review were read and discussed. Neither Caudwell's work nor

Leavis's were up for reading and discussion. For that matter, little attention was paid to the Bloomsbury group. As Williams conveys, "we bracketed any critical school which talked about sensibility together with Bloomsbury even though this was to prove historically inaccurate" (1979B:44).

Scrutiny did contest the Marxist view, particularly of literature.<sup>6</sup> But Williams recalls that, in general, literary criticism or literary history was largely neglected. He admits that,

... the negative refusal to engage with major theoretical and practical questions in the discipline of English studies itself was a crucial failure ... After the war, and we had to engage in literary criticism or history proper, we found we were left with nothing. Meanwhile English Studies had matured as a discipline, establishing itself by prolonged specialism and detailed work in field after field, to which Marxists could oppose only a precarious handful of works whose contributions to literary study was easily dismissed as reductionism (1979B:45).

Modernism, not socialist realism, was the mode that was most exciting to Williams and members of the "Writer's Group". Even before arriving at Cambridge Williams professes wanting to write like Shaw and Wells to whom he was exposed to at school. "But Joyce was without question the most important author for us ... "Ulysses" and "Finnegans Wake" -- which had just appeared in 1939 -- were the texts we most admired" (1979B:45). Modernism also included surrealism, not

only in literature but in cinema. And in music it was jazz that was the important form. Williams gives us a picture of the color of the social life:

... an upper-class style was prevalent in Cambridge Communism at the time. A party, for example, would be very unlike a post-war student affair. There would be good wine not cans of beer, and people would talk quietly - not dancing. If you married that with particular cultural interests there was undoubtedly a cross-over to a London upper-class literary life-style (1979B:45).

When Williams's membership in the Communist Party lapsed he did not renew it, nor did he formally resign. He explains,

When I went into the army I was no longer a member of the Communist Party. It must have been connected with the tensions of my second year at Cambridge ... Yet I never consciously decided to leave the party or resigned from it. (I was conscious in 1945 that I would not rejoin it (1979B:52)).

In the fifties, after the death of Stalin, Williams says that,

Whenever I reconsidered joining the Communist Party there was always [the] element in it that appealed to me. But that very close reproduction of the Labour Left was not only a strength, it was also a limit. After '53 I ceased believing that the Party in any sense had the economic or political answers to the problems of socialism in Britain, in the way I had assumed it possessed them in '45-47. Its interpretations diverged too much from reality. I don't mean just in the special case of the USSR, where it was constrained. It was in this country that they were wrong, deeply wrong. By the fifties the Party was presenting a version of developments within the society which just did not fit what was

happening in England (1979B:93).

When asked about his position during this time, Williams says that he did not fit into a particular category. People puzzled about his loyalties.

What other people said was: 'You are a Communist, not a member of the Party, but still a Communist'. I did not know what to reply. Neither no nor yes was the right answer. They would even say: 'With Party members - we know where we are, but you are worse - a maverick'. During the disputes of those years that was how people cast me (1979B:93).

Though perceived as a "maverick", Williams's socialist outlook is long rooted in his family's orientation. We recall that his grandfather turned labour when he was evicted from his land as a tenant-farmer. His father was influential in getting him into Labour party involvement.

When Williams was 14 years old (1935) he worked for Michael Foot, the Labour Party candidate in the General Election, and again for Frank Hancock who was running in the spring of 1939. During these years many socialists thought of Communism as an extension or branch of the labour party movement. Williams worked for or joined Labour "because there was no other choice" (1979B:32).

In the 1950's, he felt quite positive about the Labour Party. He thought that Labour put up a good fight against the rebuilding up of the Western military



alliance and especially against Germany rearmament. Among other things, Labour spoke out about the Soviet repression. They were in the forefront of the industrial struggles, especially the railways, and were against the idea of a mixed economy. Williams felt that, "what was needed now was a socialism of production that could resolve the problems of work itself" (1979B:368).

Though Williams appreciated a number of the positions that Labour took in the early 1950's and in a general sense with "Bevanism", he found that he could not "establish any real collaborative work with the Labour Left". Somehow they were skeptical about any new initiatives, and Williams says that he really never trusted Bevin. From 1961 to 1966 was the only time when Williams was actually a card-bearing member of the Labour Party.

By 1961, Williams and friends began to feel disenchanted with the Party. Under Gaitskill the Labour Right was "capitulating to consumer capitalism" (1979B:365). Those of the Labour Left made a big error in judgement. They underestimated the strength and resiliency of the Labour Party. Williams is particularly bitter about Labour's reversal on nuclear disarmament, especially when labour as a force was thought to have diminished (1979B:365). From Williams's point of view,

The one thing that I'm glad I got on record at the time, writing about the coming election for 'The Nation' in the USA, was my conviction that the foreign policy of the Labour Party was so dangerous and so obscure. The consequences became very clear once the Labour government was in office (1979B:367).

In 1961, Williams was teaching at Cambridge where there was a very active local left and Williams became involved. The period of self-imposed isolation was over. The big issue now was the Vietnam war. Williams spoke out at a lecture of the Fabian Society. He says,

I got up and made a scene ... we wanted to discuss what the hell to do to stop the Labour government supporting the American war in Indochina... they couldn't see that the alliance with the U.S. over Vietnam was deciding the basic political character of the Labour government (1979B:372).

Williams joined the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign and refused invitations to the U.S. for almost ten years because of the war.

The end of Williams's support for the Labour Party came in 1966. Harold Wilson's lack of support for the seaman's strike at the time and the cut in social services to shore up the exchange rate in this period of monetary crisis and deflation were all that Williams could take. In July 1966, Williams quit the Labour Party. He says that,

Watching these two connected performances, I concluded that this was the end of the road. I decided to leave the Labour Party and write some sort of manifesto, stating very clearly that the Labour Party was no longer an

adequate agency for socialism, it was now an active collaborator in the process of reproducing capitalist society (1979B:373).

In August 1966 Williams got the idea of putting out some statement or a manifesto to rally support. He, Edward Thompson and Stuart Hall were appointed editors. The MayDay Manifesto (1968/1969) was drafted with the intent of stimulating discussion in the labour movement and the hope that it would be the impetus of common debate and action.

The coordinators called a National Convention and invited representation from the wide range of socialist organizations. The purpose of the Convention was to give the movement a national presence and to organize against the right trend in the Labour government. The Convention was well attended with heated discussions bringing out the differing viewpoints. A paper was produced that was more politically oriented than the Manifesto. In spite of all this activity, the momentum of the Convention was dispersed with the 1970 elections. There were Left Labourists who felt they should support the Labour Party in any case; socialists who felt the same; communists who wanted to support their own candidates; and those, like Williams, who opted to support Left Alliance candidates. The outcome of the 1970 elections was a victory for Heath and the Conservatives. Williams wrote once again in 1971 for the Nation:

The failure of the effort of a real regroupment of the left in the 'Manifesto' affected me a lot politically: after that, the one thing I was determined not to take part in was a re-play of the sixties (1979B:376).

It was Williams's view that what was needed, and still is, is a post-social-democratic party which would revalue and establish social priorities; something "beyond existing democracy".

In summary, in Williams's formation are a number of dualisms: social class -- working-class background and academic intellectual; geographical -- country and city; religious -- church and chapel; cultural -- Wales and England, language, tradition, history; psycho-social -- parental figure (i.e. father with dual traits). There are also a number of political orientations -- Labour, Populist, Communist, Socialist, and Social Democrat.

The intellectual assumptions of Williams's problematic are also of a dualist nature and encompass two distinct traditions: a literary and a Marxist one. To make explicit the epistemological and philosophical levels of Williams's problematic and the import these have on Williams's theory, concept, and methods, it is necessary to understand Williams's intellectual assumptions. The following two chapters are devoted to tracing the root of these two major intellectual influences.

## NOTES

1. For the most part, this chapter draws on the interviews in Politics and Letters (1979B).
2. In 1536, Henry VIII joined Wales and England under the same system of law and government. Wales was divided into counties, given Parliamentary representation, and English became the official language of Wales. By the mid 1800's, the area that the Williams's lived in had become thoroughly anglicized. It was at this time that a Welsh cultural revival began to emerge. (See Hobsbaum, 1968, pp. 252-268).
3. The majority of the Welsh are Protestants in affiliation. The Methodist Church, which had a large influence, separated from the Church of England by 1811. In 1914, the Welsh Church Act had the provision that the Church of England would no longer be the state church.
4. The Communist Party had come into existence in 1920.
5. Tripos is the name of any course at Cambridge leading to a first degree as a Bachelor's in our system.
6. Williams's attitude to Scrutiny, Leavis' journal, is treated in chapter 4.

## Chapter 4

### "Against the Grain" of the Dominant Literary Tradition: The Idealist Dimension

Williams claims that his guiding interest was "to say something very much against the grain of two traditions: the dominant literary and the dominant Marxist (1979B:352). The representative figures of the dominant literary tradition were T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards, and F.R. Leavis. The impetus for Williams's critical thinking came immediately from these three literati to whom he was exposed at Cambridge.

On his return to Cambridge following service in World War Two, Williams found that "... Eliot's Four Quartets completely dominated reading and discussion" (1979B:67). In Williams's view, disagreements that were evoked during discussions of Eliot were more than academic. He recalls his disappointment with some of his friends who thought of themselves as committed socialists yet who endorsed Eliot's thinking. Above all Williams's rejected the pessimism that Eliot's writings elicited (1979B:67,68). It was then that Williams began to take a stand against the dominant literary trend. It was necessary, in his view, "to counter the appropriation of a long line of thinking about culture to what were by now decisively reactionary positions" (Williams, 1979B:97).

Discourse in Literary Criticism: Britain Post 1918

The context for these reactionary positions is in the discourse of British literary thought after the first world war. Prior to 1918, A.R. Jones (in Cox and Dyson, 1972) points out that personalities rather than theories dominated English literary criticism. He described the state of the art at that time:

At one end of the scale there is a point at which mere book-reviewing shades into criticism and at the other end where criticism becomes mere metaphysics and the middle ground is mainly confusion (in Cox and Dyson, 1972:457, 458).

After 1918 and the war, English studies became established in the universities. This was a move away from the dominance of the classics to meet the demands of post-war modern society. The change in emphasis came to be widely accepted: "The field of the literary critic was no longer literature alone but literature and life" (Jones, in Cox and Dyson, 1972:458). Jones writes of the new role assumed by literary criticism:

... A new professionalism entered the field of criticism. Never was criticism so active or so militantly pursued, never before had such claims been made on its behalf ... In this period literary criticism seems to have become what theology had been in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - the area that engaged the attention of many of the best minds of the age although, as in theological dispute, these minds often seemed to be at the service of deeply entrenched convictions... In this new theology questions of literature and morality were inextricably linked and the discussion of literature, even

at a textual level, was likely to set off arguments of a distinctly theoretical nature, that is, an argument concerning the nature of morality (Jones, in Cox and Dyson, 1972: 457: 458).

Literary analysis extended to include the life sciences, anthropology, sociology, psychology and philosophy. Literary criticism, and not just its object literature, came into focus as a subject in its own right. As Jones points out further, "Indeed some of the most distinguished and most characteristic literary criticism of the period is devoted to exploring and defining literary criticism" (Jones, in Cox and Dyson, 1972:458). Leading the way were T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis.

Assessing the three, Jones writes that T.S. Eliot "as a poet and critic - - dominated the post-war generation"; I.A. Richards "is best considered rather than a literary critic, - - as a theorist - - his work [was] vastly influential"; and F.R. Leavis was "the critic who best characterizes the period as a whole" (Jones, in Cox and Dyson, 1972: 459-469). It is widely accepted that the work of Eliot and Richards laid the foundation of modern literary critical theory, which Leavis promulgated. Ironically, the work of these founders was such that "a movement away from subjectivistic approaches became but an engagement with the new fetish of the text abstracted from its context" (Pekete, 1978:19). Together, "Richards's materialism



and Eliot's idealism combine to form a modified scientific objectivism that displaces the subjectivist Bloomsbury approaches in favour of an object-centered criticism" (Fekete, 1978:19). Leavis carries forth this thrust.

In his revaluation, Williams accepted a number of ideas, particularly that of culture, associated with Eliot, Richards, and Leavis. This has led to the charge by Eagleton that Williams is just the latest figure in "the tradition" which includes a long line of British intellectuals from S.L. Coleridge, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold; that Williams has not extricated himself from the conservative and idealist bias of the past. To some degree this is true. Until 1970 when Williams began to develop a cultural materialist position, his thinking was colored by the views that Eliot, Richards and Leavis upheld, particularly with respect to the concept of culture. It is fair to say that there is an idealist dimension in Williams's problematic.

#### Culture As a "Whole Way of Life"

Despite all his reservations about Eliot's reactionary position, Williams found some accord with Eliot's idea of "culture as a whole way of life" and the idea of "levels" that he posited. Though articulated in a different fashion, Richards and Leavis who followed Eliot maintained the same holistic view of

culture.

Eliot's version of culture "as a whole way of life" did not originate with him. It is an idea that is continuous from Coleridge, through Carlyle. In Williams's view, Eliot's version is a qualitative change from the past. Eliot moves from a "personal assertion of value" to "a general intellectual method" (1958:229). Eliot's understanding of culture is not only holistic, but is an organic one. In Eliot's terms,

By 'culture', then, I mean first of all what the anthropologists mean: the way of life of a particular people living together in one place. That culture is made visible in their arts, in their social system, in their habits and customs, in their religion. But these things added together do not constitute the culture, though we speak for convenience as parts into which a culture can be anatomized as a human body can. But just as a man is something more than an assemblage of the various constituent parts of his body, so a culture is more than the assemblage of its arts, customs, and religious beliefs. These things all act upon each other, and fully to understand one you have to understand all (1975:302).

It is this organic holistic understanding of "culture" that is central in Williams's works until he begins to reformulate his thinking along Marxist lines. The whole is privileged over the parts: "culture is more than an assemblage of its parts".

Eliot also posits the idea of cultural "levels".

He writes,

As a society develops towards functional complexity and differentiation, we may expect the emergence of several cultural levels: in short, the culture of the class or group will present itself. It will not, I think, be disputed that in any future society, as in every civilized society of the past, there must be these different levels (1975:293).

Eliot suggests that as societies develop, so does differentiation or specialization. In the process of specialization, different strata evolve: "some more highly cultured groups"; "some more highly cultured arts". Eliot warns of the danger of specialization. In his estimation, "cultural disintegration may ensue upon cultural specialization".

Cultural disintegration is present when two or more strata so separate that these become in effect distinct cultures; and also when culture at the upper group level breaks into fragments each of which represents one cultural activity alone (1975:293).

On careful inspection, Williams points to the elitest implication. Williams asks, how can an organic whole incorporate higher and lower cultures, higher and lower arts, and by implication persons in higher and lower statuses and yet sustain egalitarian ideals? While Williams envisions the necessity of cultural levels, or for some mediation of the whole, he cannot accept Eliot's conclusion. He cannot agree with the discrepancy between democratic ideals and a stratification of culture: higher to lower in specific

arts; higher to lower in specific classes of people.

The notion of levels poses the question for necessary mediations of the cultural whole. Eliot raises the point, but then Williams cannot support the end-point: the elitism. Williams continues to grapple with the idea of levels or mediations over the years. Still, Williams adopts Eliot's idea of culture as "a whole way of life", as a general principle. An holistic organic vision of culture is preferable to the isolation and fragmentation that was the inheritance of earlier aesthetic or romantic understandings.

Following Eliot's seminal work, "Richards's claim to have pioneered Anglo-American New Criticism of the thirties and forties is unassailable" (Watson, 1973: 186). In the summer of 1919 Richards completed reading Moral Science at Cambridge when he was invited to lecture on Critical Theory at the newly developing School of English. It was during the twenties that Richards's impact was at its peak.

In his continuing inquiry, among other aspects, Williams revalues Richards's idea of culture. It too is an holistic one. In Richards Williams finds a renewed definition of the relation of art and civilization. Richards, along with Eliot, Leavis and others, all reacted against that part of romantic theory which idealized "the isolation of the aesthetic experience", and which came to dominate. Richards stands in the tradition of Arnold in reacting against the isolating

and anarchistic implications of romantic theory. Culture as a whole is the alternative.

Richards's conception of culture is distinguished from that within the Arnoldian tradition in that the former is founded not on old values but on a "new consciousness" sketched out in Richards's "Psychological Theory of Value". In this theory, art is conceived as organization. Literature and art are prime examples of coherence and order; as such they provide values. Value is a question of the growth of order. The order and unity of conception and execution that is integral to art is in contrast to the fragmentation of the romantic division of art into imaginative truth and skills.

Implied in Richards's definition of art as organization is the function of art in society and a redefinition of play. Art is play in that play is preparatory to life experience: "play is readiness for action" (Williams, 1958:242). Here are the implications for an entire educational program: the reintegration of art within a whole way of life, a "whole culture". The isolation of art and play from work is no longer tenable.

Williams finds accord with Richards's holistic idea of culture: art as organization. Richards offers a positive account, new directions and a clarification of culture concept. In principle Richards's idea of culture as "whole way of life" is not unlike Eliot

preceding him nor F.R. Leavis succeeding.

Chronologically, Frank Raymond Leavis followed Eliot and Richards in influence. Richards was one of Leavis's teachers in the new English School of Cambridge. During Williams's first period at Cambridge -- 1939 to 1941 -- he was not particularly conscious of Leavis. The notion of "sensibility", part of the Leavisian vocabulary, somehow did penetrate Williams's consciousness. One of the articles Williams wrote during this period was "Literature and the Cult of Sensibility". On Williams's return to Cambridge after the war in 1945, he was fully aware of the "specific literary culture that centered on Leavis" (1979B:61).<sup>2</sup> A number of key ideas in Williams's problematic -- "sensibility", the notions of "community" and "structure of feeling" have their roots in Leavis's discourse.

Leavis's stand with respect to culture as a "whole way of life" is aligned with Eliot's and Richards's. "Art is not", according to Leavis, "to be kept in a separate compartment from 'life' and judged by different standards" (Hayman, 1976:XIV). Art like life is value-laden, such that, ... "a work of art involves an element of implicit valuation" (Hayman, 1976:XIV). Williams is sympathetic to these considerations and has sought to articulate and extend the art/society relations.

It can be seen how the idea of an holistic concept

of culture -- culture inseparable from "way of life" -- resonates in Eliot, Richards, Leavis. From 1950 to 1970, it is this version of culture that has primacy in Williams's thought style. The implications in terms of the idealist bias needs to be further articulated.

We recall that Eliot's specification of culture as a "whole way of life" is synonymous with an organic whole. Williams is somewhat uneasy about this version. But at this time, Williams does not have an alternative. Nor does he deliberate on the assumptions. Williams accepts the definition posited by Eliot and supported, least implicitly, by Richards and Leavis. He adds a cautionary note; a note that is a characteristic historical survey of the meanings (1958:256). Williams lists the various meanings accorded to the idea of the organic over time. He makes explicit the complexity of the multidimensional meanings. The implications, though, are not drawn out. What does an organic version of culture presuppose?

Drawing on the analysis by Kosik (1969:49) and Piccone (1968:38-83), an organic or neo-romantic totality hypostatizes the whole before the parts and makes the whole into a myth (See Appendix 2). The totality is a ready-made whole which is then filled with content, with the properties of the parts and their relationship.

In Kosik's view, a false totality manifests itself in three ways: (1) as an empty totality, it lacks

reflexivity, it lacks the determination of individual moments and analysis; (2) as an abstract totality; the whole is formalized against the parts as a "superior reality". It lacks genesis, development, the creation of the whole. It occludes the structuration and destructuration process; and (3) as a closed totality it is a "bad" totality ("bad" totality is used by Kurt Konrad in a polemic against formalism, in Kosik, 1969:52). The trajectory of an organic totality ends where the authentic subject is replaced by a mythical subject. The end point approaches the anti-humanist structuralist posture of Levi-Strauss and Althusser. The idea of whole over all else is the quintessence of idealism: "mind over matter".

Williams's adoption of the concept of culture as "a whole way of life" following Eliot, Richards and Leavis carries the implications of an idealized organic whole. This is the most disturbing dimension of Williams's problematic for such critics as Kiernan (1959); Thompson (1961); the New Left Review editors (1979B:351-358) and others. It is as an empty totality towards which the critics direct their reservations. Particularly as articulated in Culture and Society (1958) and The Long Revolution (1961B), Williams's formulations lack determination.

As pointed out previously (Chapter 2, p.7), one of the clearest examples is in The Long Revolution where Williams posits four co-equal systems: of decision; of



communication and learning; of maintenance; and of generation and nurture (1961B:136). The four systems as articulated appear in balance and co-equal within the whole. The terms mask what Williams is talking about: i.e. the system of decision equals system of power; the system of maintenance equals the economic system. By putting it this way, there is no way of ascertaining the relations of the four systems: their determination, reflexivity or interaction. There appears no weighting among the systems, no priority, no primary determination. It seems as if the system of decision i.e. power systems -- government, juridicial, policy, army -- were equal to the system of generation and nurture, i.e. the family. It seems as if the system of maintenance, i.e. the economic, has no necessary determining impact on any other. The language and conceptualizations idealize relations of power that in fact do pertain. Williams formulations connote the characteristics of an organic totality: empty, abstract, and closed.

From the positions of Kiernan, Thompson and The Left Review editors, it is the economic that has more weight, that has, a more determining impact, at least, "in the last resort". Williams has resisted according priority to the economy in its determinations (1979B:350-358). Even in his latest work Towards 2000 (1983D:15), he asserts that modern society, and Britain as an exemplar, is far too complex to be described by a

single determinant.

It is not as if Williams upholds an organic, holistic concept of culture above all else. He is quite aware of the dangers of hypostatization, idealization, and abstraction. But in the first ten years of his work, at least, there seems no alternative to an holistic organic concept of culture in the face of the fragmentation, separation or segmentation extant in the capitalist industrialist order, or the isolation in the romantic vision. It is a central issue which continues to concern him with over the years.

Finally Williams formulates a dialectical whole, culture: as a "realized and related signifying system" (Culture, 1981C). By the mid-seventies, he adopts the Althusserian notion of "levels of practice" as a means of mediating the whole and overcoming the mythic and idealized version of culture as a "whole way of life".

While Williams accepted the notion of culture as "a whole way of life" as I have detailed, there is a number of concepts which Williams rejects in his considerations of Eliot, Richards, and Leavis. He refuses their ideas on language, the role of literature and literary criticism, and above all, the elitist turn in their thought — particularly as articulated by Eliot and Leavis.

Language A Topic In Its Own Right

For Eliot, Richards and Leavis, language assumes an importance in its own right; not just as a medium, but as a subject of attention and analysis. For Eliot, language shapes experience. For Richards, "the universe as known to us is a fabric constituted, continued, and maintained by language" (Fekete, 1978:20). And for Leavis, a leading idea is

"the over-whelming importance of the English language itself. Literature is the most powerful, human subtle and inclusive use of language" (Walsh, 1980:59).

Ironically, in the emphasis on the significance of language, its objectification becomes a fetish in the thought of Eliot, Richards, and Leavis. Fekete points this out when he writes,

Language, in this conception, is the means to mental order, and 'the instrument of all our distinctively human development, of everything in which we go beyond the other animals'. This fetish of language which abstracts it from the work process is part of that reduction of human life to epistemological dimensions that characterizes the tradition, especially in the later stages (Fekete, 1978:20).

It is just this fetishism of language which Williams seeks to overcome.

By tracing semantic transformations in relation to societal transformations, Williams refutes the ossification of language. Reverence for language can no

longer be maintained. For Williams, language is a special map, but not the means to mental order. Language embodies order, cohesiveness and continuity, but also disorder, divisiveness, and change. Williams maintains that language is not the only source of intelligibility and of social life, but one source. Williams points to the materiality of language; a view that is a special feature of Williams's problematic. Language can no longer be abstracted from the work process but is entirely enmeshed with it.

In Williams's problematic the importance of language as a subject, as a special focus, is rooted in Eliot, Richards, and Leavis. But Williams's originality comes from the linguistic approach he takes. It is an historical semantic approach which has the effect of de-mystifying, de-reifying, 'unfreezing' received linguistic categories. While Williams retains the emphasis on the importance of language, he rejects the idealist trajectory dominant in the tradition. Above all, a key feature in Williams's works is his recognition of semantic and linguistic change as a special map to culture and society.

### Literature, Literary Criticism

Associated with the importance of language is the value of literature and literary criticism in the thinking of Eliot, Richards and Leavis. For example, we recall Richards's valuation of literature as a 'prime

mode of coherence and order. In Richards's thinking the study of literature is the best "training ground for life". This perspective is very much within the British dominant literary tradition: the study of literature as a primary value. It is this idea that Williams finds objectionable. From Williams's perspective it sets literature up as the ideal mode. In Williams's view,

Great literature is indeed enriching, liberating, and refining, but man is always and everywhere more than a reader, has indeed to be a great deal else before he can even become an adequate reader; unless indeed he can persuade himself that literature, as an ideal sphere of heightened living, will under certain cultural circumstances operate as substitute (1958:245).

Contrary to "the tradition", Williams asserts that, poetry or any fiction alone is not capable of saving us.

Along the same line, Williams's critical attitude is even more pointed when it comes to the role of literary criticism, especially that which Leavis propounds. Whereas for Leavis, literary criticism is central, as it

...trains, in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating a sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity of intelligence - intelligence that integrates as well as analyses and must have, pernacity and staying power as well as delicacy. (in Hayman, 1976:64, 65).

Williams contends,

I agree with Leavis, as with Coleridge and Arnold and with Burke the common teacher of this point, that a society is poor indeed if it has nothing to live by but its own immediate and contemporary experience. But the ways in which we can draw on other experiences are more various than literature alone. For experience that is formally recorded we go, not only to the rich source of literature, but also to history, building, painting, music, philosophy, theology, political and social theory, the physical and natural sciences, and indeed the whole body of learning. We go also, if we are wise, to the experience that is otherwise recorded: in institutions, manners, customs, family memories (1958:248).

In Williams's view, to place literature and literary criticism at the center of all learning is a fault.

Literature is one important mode of learning, but not the only one. In Williams's terms,

To put upon literature, or more accurately upon criticism, the responsibility of controlling the quality of the whole range of personal and social experience, is to expose a vital case to damaging misunderstanding (1958:249).

To put upon literature, or criticism, the onus of primacy is to treat the area in isolation or abstraction -- as an idealism.

In contrast to the attitude regarding the value and role of literature and literary criticism, is Williams's attitude towards "practical criticism". The mode of "practical criticism" that Richards established has had a long-lasting influence. Williams attests to

its importance for him and others at Cambridge. He says that,

... if you look at the actual history, the mode of practical criticism was established within Cambridge English during the twenties by Richards. It was he, after all, who coined the term. Thereafter it was an established procedure in the Faculty as a whole. So for example during the years in which Leavis was largely excluded from the English Faculty, practical criticism remained, as it has to this day ... We all practiced it ... (1979B:190,191).

On Williams's part, his main use of "practical criticism" is to apply the technique to drama. For the most part "practical criticism" had been used to analyze poetry. There was then the extension of this kind of analysis to fiction. Work on drama using the technique of "practical criticism" was practically nonexistent. In his work on Drama from Ibsen to Eliot (1958) Williams relates that,

Without being consciously aware of this at the time, I used the technique in an unorthodox way in my book on drama... Its aim is the elucidation of the composition and the continuity of theme within their works (1979B:193).

The technique introduced by Richards was an innovative departure from traditional critical approaches. Richards demonstrated that,

the cultural consensus around certain earlier notions of cultivation or taste could be quite brutally refuted by presenting people

with texts without any cultural signals like the author's name, or any other cues, to 'the right response' (1979B:192).

For Williams, the implications of Richard's experimentation "was anti-ideological in a very crucial sense: it exposed the disparity between the cultural pretensions of a class and its actual capacities" (1979B:193).

Richards's work generated a wide range of use with

"The result [that] ... the subsequent definition of the work as 'text' ... [led to] ... an ideological capture which has persisted relatively intact from English Practical Criticism to American New Criticism right down to Literary Structuralism today (1979B:193).

This is another problem. Leavis was most influential in promoting Richards's practical criticism. As Williams recalls,

... the discovery of practical criticism ... was intoxicating, something I cannot describe too strongly. Especially if you were as discontented as I then was. I said intoxication, which is a simultaneous condition of elation, excitement and loss of measure and intelligence. Yes, it was all those things, but let me put it on record that it was incredibly exciting. I still find it exciting, and at times I have positively to restrain myself from it because actually I can do it reasonably well (1979B:66).

Williams argues that there is nothing inherently ideological in the technique of a close verbal reading of a text by and of itself. Rather the key to the ideological implication is the determination of the purpose or the method for which the technique is used.



Within Williams's problematic, it "... is the employment of what may look like the same technique for radically distinct purposes" (1979B:193).

Though practical criticism proved to be thoroughly engaging, for the most part, Williams resisted its power. Williams found the technique of close verbal reading to be valuable but resisted fixing it to the trappings of an idealist or positivist philosophical base.

#### Against Elitism

In much the same selective fashion, Williams rejects the elitist bias in his predecessors. Somewhat paradoxically both Eliot and Leavis first directed their thinking against the conservatism and reactionary postures prevailing before World War One. As their thinking developed, and in a parallel fashion, their ideas became elitist. Eliot's discussion of Mannheim (1971) illustrates the elitist turn.

Eliot takes issue with Mannheim's propositions on elites and the substitution of elites for classes. Williams underscores:

Mannheim's argument may be seen, fundamentally, as an epilogue to the long nineteenth century attempt to re-identify class with function. This took the form, either of an attempt to revive obsolete classes (as in Coleridge's idea of the clerisy), or of an appeal to existing classes to resume their functions (Carlyle, Ruskin), or of an attempt to form a new class, the civilizing minority (Arnold). Mannheim, quite rightly, realizes that these attempts

have largely failed. Further, he rejects the idea of classes based on birth, or money, and, emphasizing the necessary specialization and complexity of modern society, proposes to substitute for the old classes the new elites, whose basis is neither birth nor money, but achievement (1958:235).

Eliot argues that Mannheim's position is based on an "atomistic" view of society in contradistinction to an "organic" view. In Williams's opinion,

The definition of culture, as 'a whole way of life' is vital at this point, for Eliot is quite right to point out that to limit, or attempt to limit, the transmission of culture to a system of formal education is to limit a whole way of life to certain specialisms (1958:236).

It is Eliot's contention that a Mannheimian view of the intellectual elite has its base in an atomistic society which only leads to further separation of groups in society and further disintegration and fragmentation. As Williams relates, "Eliot argues that while an elite may have more of the necessary skills than a class, it will lack that wider social continuity which a class guaranteed" (1958:236). The idea of an intellectual elite mitigates against the desired continuity that Mannheim valued and stressed. With the Mannheimian ramifications in mind, Eliot argues against the isolated intellectual elite. He maintains the need for social class as a basis for social continuity.

However, as Williams indicates, in Eliot's schema, the social class capable of ensuring cultural

continuity is a particular governing class. Surely, as Williams suggests, it is one "with which the elite will overlap and constantly interact" (1958:237).

Williams finds that Eliot does a complete reversal: from elite to class, and back to elite. He says it

... is Eliot's fundamentally conservative conclusion, for it is clear, when the abstractions are translated, that what he recommends is substantially what now exists, socially. He is, of course, led necessarily to condemn the pressure for a classless society, and for a national educational system (1958:237).

The contradiction in Eliot is quite clear. As Williams underlines, the values of an organic culture, "a whole way of life" are at loggerheads with the economic tenets of a conservative view of society:

The 'free economy' which is the central tenet of contemporary conservatism not only contradicts the social principles which Eliot advances (if it were only this one could say merely that he is an unorthodox conservative), but also, and this is the real confusion, is the only available method of ordering society to the maintenance of those interests and institutions on which Eliot believes his values to depend (1958:237).

In his critique of Eliot, Williams points at the conservative bias and the contradiction of this bias with Eliot's idea of culture as a whole way of life. In Eliot, there is a simplification and idealization of society. It is not actual relations that Eliot is concerned with but some lofty ideal or vision of the romantic past.

Again the values of an organic culture come into conflict with the idea of culture as a specialized development or as specialized arts. For how is a whole culture -- in its generalized sense, or culture as specialized arts in specified sense -- to permeate the society? How is culture to be diffused? Or, rather, more importantly, who is to diffuse culture? This brings up the question of the relation of elites and social class. For Eliot, an equality of diffusion is hardly tenable. The idea of a cultivated minority -- an elite -- is obviously the outcome of Eliot's thinking.

Also in Leavis is the view that only a minority is capable of appreciating, transmitting and propagating the values of the literary heritage. The idea of a minority elite stands in contradiction to Leavis's idea of a democratized education. Williams's argument against the elitist trend in Leavis is representative of his stance. He writes,

... the extremely valuable educational proposals, and the important and illuminating local judgements, which are real gains, have to be set against losses, some of which are serious. The concept of a cultivated minority, set over against a 'decreated' mass, tends, in its assertion, to a damaging arrogance and scepticism. The concept of a wholly organic and satisfying part, to be set against a disintegrated and dissatisfying present, tends in its neglect of history to a denial of real social experiences (1958:255).

With respect to Leavis's critical stance, Williams

comments: "The immense attraction to Leavis lay in his cultural radicalism, quite clearly" (1979B:66). If we take into account the attitude of the majority of academics at Cambridge at this time, it is not difficult to understand that Leavis's "sheer tone of critical irritation was congenial to our mood" (1979B:66). Against the current, Leavis spoke out on the academicism of the universities, the subjectivism of the Bloomsbury group, the metropolitan-society culture, the commercial press, advertising and more.

On the subject of education Leavis's stress seemed right to Williams at the time: Leavis "... would always emphasize that there was an enormous educational job to be done. Of course, he defined it in his own terms" (1979B:66). Between 1940 and 1943, Leavis formulated a number of theoretical and practical educational proposals in four essays published in Scrutiny under the title "Education and the University". It was Leavis's contention that education should "... preserve and develop a continuity of consciousness and a mature directing sense of value - a sense of value informed by a traditional wisdom" (in Hayman, 1976:64). He spoke also of the value for students of formal learning at Cambridge and "intra-departmental communication" despite the disfavour he incurred on the part of the established Cambridge faculty. Leavis's educational agenda struck a responsive chord in Williams. But it was principally the educational program of Scrutiny

that was of great importance to Williams.<sup>5</sup>

Williams's own affiliation to Scrutiny is epitomized by him as "guarded but strong" (1979B:65). In fact Williams did not queue up to become a contributor to Scrutiny. His reaction against the Scrutiny position was precisely the impetus for Williams and his friends -- Mankowitz and Collins -- to initiate their own journal Politics and Letters. It came about as Williams fully realized that Leavis's cultural position was categorically not a socialist one. For a while he had imagined that it was possible to "combine ... practical criticism with a clear Socialist cultural position" (1979B:66); an idea that he finally realized was in fact ludicrous.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, it is untenable to label Williams as a follower of Eliot, Richards or Leavis. There are links to Leavis as to the others in the literary tradition, but these must be specified, and examined as to what degree they are maintained. The centrality of literary criticism to humanistic education; the promotion of practical criticism as a technique for textual analysis; the integral relation between art and life; the value of art for life; the stress on language; the key concepts of "community", "sensibility", "structure of feeling": these are all

particular aspects that have had a profound influence on Williams's thought and works.

On the other hand, Williams rejects the primacy of literary criticism and literature. He rejects the reduction of all other ways of knowledge to literature. While Williams is enamoured with "practical criticism" as technique, he refuses the subversion of technique to philosophic principle. That is, the technique became the fetishizing of the object of literature, the text. The stress on language as an intrinsic and vital phenomenon is in keeping with Williams's view, but to consider the continuity without the discontinuities is where Williams draws the line.

The concepts "community", "sensibility" and "structure of feeling" derive clearly from the Eliot-Richards-Leavis influence. The "quest for community" and the need to stay in touch with feeling in response to the forces of disintegration and alienation is a valid one. Williams's use of the construct "structure of feeling" was his attempt to bring into systematic, rational analysis those aspects of living -- thought, values, feelings, beliefs -- that are neither strictly observable nor easily subjected to the scientific method. The construct "structure of feeling" serves Williams as a heuristic tool. With respect to the idea of culture as a "whole way of life", the stress on the integral relation between art and life is one that Williams could identify with. But then, the turn from

this all-embracing vision to the assertion of "minority culture" is anathema to Williams. It "smacks" of the elitism of Eliot and others in "the tradition".

Eagleton has argued that Williams is just the latest figure in a long line of romantic conservative and idealist British thinkers -- from John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Mathew Arnold; that Williams has not extricated himself from this past. The question put in this thesis is: is Williams just another figure in "the tradition" or has he, as he claims gone "against the grain"?

On scale, if one takes a view of Williams's works as text, that is, as a whole, then individual works are seen as part of the development and as developmental stages. Williams's problematic cannot be simply written off as Eagleton has done. There is a duality in Williams's problematic: there are idealist and materialist elements; there are idealist and materialist moments (see Barnett, 1976). There are the efforts to "move against the grain" of the idealist trappings. There are the efforts to "move against the grain" of rigid materialist trappings too. It is to this, we turn now.



## NOTES

1. If we consider the following passages, we find that Williams is highly critical of Eliot's conservatism. He writes,

In 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture', Eliot's essential conservatism is very much more evident; but I think we can assume, and many who now look to him might remember that his more recent inquiry was only undertaken from the standpoint of that far-reaching criticism of contemporary society and contemporary social philosophy which, 'The Idea of a Christian Society' so outspokenly embodies (1958:227).

Eliot recognizes the need for elites, or rather for an elite, and argues that, to ensure general continuity, we must retain social classes, and in particular a governing social class, with which the elite will overlap and constantly interact. This is Eliot's conclusion, for it is clear, when the abstractions are translated, that what he recommends is substantially what now exists, socially. He is, of course, led necessarily to condemn the pressure for a classless society, and for a national educational system (1958:237).

I have already indicated that I believe his criticism of certain orthodox ideas of 'culture' to be valuable ... As a conservative thinker, he has succeeded in exposing the limitations of an orthodox 'liberalism' which has been all too generally and too complacently accepted (1958:237).

If Eliot, when read attentively, has the effect of checking the complacencies of liberalism, he has also, when read critically, the effect of making complacent conservatism impossible. The next step, in thinking of these matters, must be in a different direction, for Eliot has closed almost all the existing roads (1958:238).

2. Hayman echoes those who have praised Leavis when he writes: "In my opinion Leavis is the most important critic of the century" (Hayman, 1976:xii).
3. See Appendix 2 for "Versions of the Dialectic". The main thrust of three versions of the dialectical whole are schematized. It is intended to provide a basis for understanding Williams's conceptions. Of course, the ideas of totality, unity and holism are emblematic of the discipline of sociology. Auguste Comte is considered "... first and foremost, the sociologist of human and social unity" (Aron, 1965:59). In Durkheim the idea that, "... society is simply community written large" (Nisbet, 1966:84), is an holistic one. Aside from the Marxists, the systemic ideas of Parsons and others who adhere to a structural-functionalism are also ideas which have a horizon of the whole (see discussion by Demerath, 1967:501-518).
4. In a more recent critique, Williams finds that practical criticism "...tends to become too dominant a mode, precisely because it evades both structural problems and in the end all questions of belief and ideology" (1979B:66).
5. See Scrutiny IX 2, September 1940; IX 3, December 1940; IX 4, March 1941; and XI 3, Spring, 1943.

## Chapter 5

### "Against the Grain" of the Dominant Marxist Tradition: The Materialist Dimension

#### The Marxist Discourse

Williams's early stance on Marxist theory is expressed in Culture and Society (1958). He says that,

.... the characteristic rhetoric of the Marxism I had known in the thirties was precisely that capitalism was at fault because it failed to produce, because it was responsible for the depression: whereas the image of the Soviet Union was exalted in terms of industrial productivity to the point of parody. It is very curious that the historical-materialist theory should in that respect know the history but not the material. This is not true of Marx where the physical process is quite vivid (1979B: 115).

It is "against the grain" of the truncated version of the Marxism of the 1930's and 1940's that Williams responds to. The effort to put Marxist thought on the so-called sound "scientific" footing had the effect of doctrinaire reductionism. Stalin succeeded in his purges, of both people and ideas.

In Culture and Society (1958), Williams recognized that Marx's idea of culture was not widely known. A number of important texts were not printed until the 1920's and 30's and even later. <sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding the limited texts available, Williams realized that Marx's thoughts on literature were not fully developed but programmatic. Both Marx and Engels warned of rigid and

dogmatic interpretations. The passage referred to is the now celebrated one in the "Preface to his Critique of Political Economy" (taken from Marx's economic manuscripts of 1857-58). Also in Engels's letter to Bloch 21 September 1890, there was the further admonition not to distort his intentions and that of Marx. Marx and Engels were fully aware of the complexity in the structure/superstructure formula. Engels introduced the notion of interaction between the base and superstructure; a notion that Plekhanov (1895) attempted to further elaborate with limited success.

In Culture and Society (1958) Williams proposed that the strict morphological language of base-superstructure should not be understood literally. The interjection by Engels that base/superstructure relations suggest three levels of reality -- the economic situation, the political situation, the state of theory -- did not ameliorate the problem in Williams's view. Williams proposed that the notion of levels hardly does justice to the dynamic and diversity of the relations. Neither did the Engels and Plekhanov model, suggesting interactive processes, account for the determination of the economic.

At this time in his search, Williams found the Marxist theories confused. He asserted that the primary question was to ascertain whether the economic element is in fact determining. Yet, as Williams states, "... the difficulty lies in estimating the

final importance of a factor which never, in practice, appears in isolation" (1958:272). In Williams's perspective "... even if the economic element is determining, it determines a whole way of life, and it is to this, rather than to the economic system alone, that literature has to be related" (1958:272).

It is only after Culture and Society and after a period of isolation, from 1947 to 1957, that Williams exposed himself to Marxist thought once again. After World War Two, Marxism in Britain took a new turn. What came to be recognized as the "New Left" developed: "an amalgam of theories within a specific practice, in specific social and historical conditions ..."<sup>2</sup> (1977C:3). There were elements in the "New Left" formation that Williams could identify with. He found:

an immediate affinity with my own kind of cultural and literary work (in positions which had in fact been latent as early as the work in "Politics and Letters" in 1947 and 1948; positions which remained underdeveloped because the conditions for such a formation did not then fully exist) (1977C:2,3).

Williams began to focus systematically on the received Marxist tradition in the 1950's. He says,

To see that theoretical formation clearly, and to trace its hybridization with a strong native radical populism, was to understand both my respect for and my distance from what I had hitherto known as Marxism tout court. It was also to gain a sense of the degree of selection and interpretation which, in relation to both Marx and to the whole long Marxist argument and inquiry, that familiar and orthodox position effectively represented (1977C:3).

Over the years, Williams incorporated a variety of Marxist conceptualizations drawing on Lukacs, Gramsci, Goldmann, Althusser, Timpanaro and Bahro among others. He created a set of concepts which together constitute his cultural materialist perspective. In tracing this Marxist line and in understanding Williams's thought style, Lukacs is the pivotal figure.

### The Lukacsian Link

Despite his many refutations and recantations, and his political embroilments, Lukacs countered the prevailing Marxist orthodoxy and its strict deterministic, scientific and mechanical versions. He also countered the prevailing Capitalist mode and its alienating, abstractive and reductionist tendencies.

Lukacs represents a partiality in thought style that Williams can appreciate. In schematic terms, the following is a comparison of Lukacs and Williams along a number of dimensions: the overall philosophical view; epistemological stance; methodology; a number of key theoretical conceptualizations; and substantive interests.

Like Lukacs, Williams's overall philosophical view is a humanist and emancipatory one. The trajectory of thought is radical: the elimination of bonds that

imprison mankind. In epistemological stance, the dialectic is at the heart and pervades the thought style. Knowledge is gained by a grasp of the whole. Fragmentation is anathema. Methodologically the historical thrust is part of the dialectic totality: the present is informed by the past with an eye to the future. Conceptually, "culture" is the controlling idea. In substance, there is an interest in literary and aesthetic problems.

To further elaborate, the epistemological dimensions of Williams's thought style are characterized by the dualisms of his lived experiences (chapter three) and a dual intellectual heritage. Williams's lived experiences -- Pandy and Cambridge, working class and intellectual elite, church and chapel, England and Wales, English and Welsh, country and city -- are salient in his works as he attests (chapter three). The genealogy of the intellectual assumptions of Williams's thought is also a dual one: a literary and a Marxist one. As indicated in the previous chapter, the initial spur to Williams's intellectual thinking came from the literary tradition -- Leavis following Richards and Eliot. The Marxist line traces from Lukacs back to Weber, Dilthey and Simmel. These two traditions come together in Williams's thought style in communion.<sup>3</sup> These two sets of dualisms -- the lived experiences and the intellectual formation -- are constitutive of Williams's own mode of knowing and are implicit in his

theory of knowledge. These dualities -- his lived experiences and his dual intellectual heritage -- stand in contradistinction to Williams's work towards the resolution of false dualisms. Also in contrast to Williams's efforts at dualism resolution is the problem of a dualism which is located in his materialist stance. As explicated in what follows, this problem is implicated in Williams's thinking on science and on society.

Philosophically Williams holds to an idea of totality which approximates the dialectic in Lukacs. Totality is the central category of Lukacs's understanding of the dialectic. As a key to Marxist theory, it does not alter in Lukacs's formulations from 1917-1971, despite frequent recantations and refutations on other issues.<sup>4</sup>

The vision of a dialectical totality has implications for methodology. The essence of Marxism for Lukacs is the dialectical method: the notion of "concrete totality as a socio-historical process" is the true category of reality (Meszaros, 1972:62).<sup>5</sup> The dialectical method is not merely a set of logical procedures or rules, but a way of thinking that prevails over dichotomies of any kind, whether they be thought/action, theory/fact, determination/free-will, abstract/concrete, mind/body, etc. The crux of the matter as stated in Tactics and Ethics is:



This absolute primacy of the whole, its unity over and above the abstract isolation of its parts - such is the essence of Marx's conception of society and of the dialectical method (1919/1972:27 cited in Kolakowski, 1978:265).

Williams seeks to reject like dichotomies.

Integrally related to this primary tenet of the whole is the dynamic characteristic of dialectical unity. As Kolakowski puts it,

...the 'whole' is not simply a state of affairs comprising all the particulars of reality at a given moment. It must be understood as a dynamic reality, involving a certain trend, its direction, and its results (1978:266).

The premises of totality and mediations include an historical vision. Present facts can only be grasped as an integral historical process which incorporate past, present and future. For Williams, too, the whole is a dynamic reality. However, while this vision correlates well with Lukacs's revolutionary thrust, Williams's thinking takes a different turn. This is elaborated at a further point in this chapter.

In Lukacs the notion of mediation is crucial in understanding totality or the idea of "Totalitat".<sup>6</sup> For Lukacs,

Social "totality" exists in and through those manifold mediations through which the specific complexes - i.e. "partial totalities" - are linked to each other in a constantly shifting and changing dynamic overall complex (Meszaros, 1972:63).

Mediations are mandatory. Without mediations the risk runs negatively in two opposing ways: one towards the "cult of totality", and one towards "the cult of immediacy". Whereas the Nazi experience exemplifies "the cult of totality" drawn to its logical and destructive conclusion, "the cult of immediacy" is exemplified in the dire and existential conditions of advanced capitalist society with fragmentation, alienation and meaninglessness at its extreme. The concepts of totality and mediation enter into Lukacs's entire discourse.

In Williams's thought style, both totality and mediation are also integral. As Williams moves from the influence of the literary tradition to the Marxist one, the whole remains privileged. "Culture", the central and controlling concept throughout, remains holistic. There is a change, though, from an organic whole to a systemic one, from culture "as a whole way of life" to culture "as a realized and related signifying system" (1958 and 1981C). Nevertheless the historical thrust remains emblematic of Williams's holism. The entry to every piece, every work -- no matter what length -- is an historical survey. Williams brings into the present the past and future at one glance. Within this holism he consistently creates his own context. Also, the historical thrust is at the base of Williams's etiology of meanings. Tracing meanings has the effect of demythologizing and opening

up locked meanings.

The concept of mediation which is so central in Lukacs's totality is more problematic in Williams. As already indicated, from the time of his first major work Culture and Society (1958), Williams endeavored to find mediations of the whole. As noted in the previous chapter, he explicitly rejected Eliot's idea of "levels". The construct "structure of feeling" became the prime mediating tool linking the art form to societal formations. It is a construct that he used for decades though he was sensitive to the idealist overtones. He has been criticized for the subjectivistic connotation of "feelings" -- beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes -- and their incorporation into the more supposedly objective notion of "structures".

In one of his most recent formulations, as expanded in Culture (1981C), the construct "structure of feeling" is no longer present. The conceptual mediating tools -- "archaic, residual, dominant and emergent" -- now cut into the totality of the social organization. These concepts are directed to on-going social and cultural transformations. Levels of the social whole or organization are now viewed as "levels of practice". Notwithstanding transformations of residual, dominant and emergent levels of practice, there remains a holism in culture as "signifying system". There are also a number of differences and similarities which Lukacs and Williams hold with

respect to art, literature, science and society.

### On Art and Literature

In Lukacs's problematic, his ideas on art and literature, his attack on scientism and empiricism stem from the premises of totality and mediation. In the realm of art, it was Lukacs's intent to establish the base of a Marxist aesthetic. The major portion of his works is devoted to literary theory and criticism and to the development of a general aesthetics. His thinking is informed by working out a history of literature in general, and drama and the novel, in particular.

For Lukacs, art as distinct from science is anthropomorphic. The focus is understanding human and social conditions. Art is a vehicle of cognitive values. It is through art that man can attain knowledge of himself and his world. It is through art that man can achieve awareness of his species - nature. Art provides images of reality, laden with value, attitudinal and emotional content.

The notion of reflection features in Lukacs formulations. As imitation or mimesis, art reflects reality. In Lukacs's view, reflection is not passive copying but includes selection and universalization. Ideologically Lukacs carries forth the notion of mimesis to correlate with his vision of the world. Lukacs upholds that only "realistic" works of art truly

deserve the name of art; all else is distortion and decadence.

The notion of totality applied to literature implies that literary works must reflect in some aspect the totality of social life because nothing in social life exists alone or in a vacuum. Further implied is a normative end: "totality" in socialist art is the ideal toward which the artist "ought" to strive. With his vision of totality, Lukacs is critical of the naturalist movement which seeks to enact reality that is apparent and can be ascertained under direct observation.

The concept of mediation is grasped by its counterpart in art: "speciality" (Besonderheit).

Speciality in art is defined "as this process whereby a writer transforms individual experiences into types or images of universal validity, so that they become the medium through which the reader apprehends the social whole" (Kolakowski, 1978:291; see also Meszaros, 1972: 63).

The measure that Lukacs uses throughout are the notions of totality and mediation. In distinguishing art as realism, both critical and socialist, Lukacs takes a stand against all movements of art -- naturalism, expressionism, surrealism -- that are not realistic and that do not relate to the Marxist whole world vision. According to Lukacs, "The decisive shortcoming of all modernist literature is its

inability to grasp the 'totality' and to perform the act of mediation" (Kolakowski, 1978:293).

For Williams, art too is a vehicle of cognitive values, but not the only vehicle. Williams maintains that man can attain knowledge of himself and his world from a whole array of life experiences. Art is but one of these life experiences.

In Williams's formulations he moves from the received traditions of art as "imitation", "mimesis" or "reflection". He also moves from the concept of art as representational. Art, in Williams's explication, is a constitutive part of reality. It is a mirror and a lamp. It may reflect but it also enlightens the direction. The materiality of art is not simply a substratum, but may be the most distinctive feature of the art form or work.

In consequence, Williams rejects the Lukacsian notion that only "realistic" works of art are deserving. He rejects the normative rule that Lukacs adheres to. Williams's historical study demonstrates that there are moments of one-to-one correspondence between social relations and the art forms in their emergence at a particular time and in a particular society. Williams strives to understand the development of various movements -- naturalism, expressionism, surrealism -- as specific levels of practice which may be "archaic", "residual", "dominant" or "emergent". From Williams's perspective to make

explicit the "ideological hegemonic" function of art, and to take into account archaic, residual, dominant or emergent transformations with the social organization are the aims of a sociology of culture.

### On Science and Society

Williams's views on science also differ from Lukacs's. To review Lukacs's position, from the premises of totality and mediations also come Lukacs's attacks on scientism and empiricism. As Kolakowski frames it,

Marxism ... would be impossible if it did not involve the principle that the social 'totality' cannot be reconstructed by accumulating facts. Facts do not interpret themselves: their meaning is only revealed in relation to the whole, which must be known in advance and is thus logically prior to the facts (Kolakowski, 1978:265; see Lukacs, 1919/1972:25).

Lukacs associates most clearly with the capitalist mode of production and its dominant mode of knowledge, the whole enterprise of science. Because it is a central statement I quote it at length:

... the more intricate a modern science becomes and the better it understands itself methodologically the more resolutely it will turn its back on the ontological problem of its own sphere of influence and eliminate them from the realm where it has achieved some insight. The more highly developed it becomes and the more scientific, the more it will become a formally closed system of partial laws. It will then find that the world lying beyond its confines, and in

particular the material base which is its task to understand, 'its own concrete underlying reality' lies, methodologically and in principle, 'beyond its grasp' (Lukacs, 1971:105).

Lukacs is prophetic in this respect. He follows the logical conclusion of a science which begins by a one-to-one correspondence with a material base to ever-more specialized, detailed fragmentation. The high abstractions (i.e. mathematical formulae) lose the very material foundations that are its power in the first place. Where Lukacs fails is his blindspot to the socialist formation which too looks to science as demiurge.

Also following in the tradition of Weber, Simmel and Dilthey, Lukacs adheres to the "humanistic coefficient". The human subject is an integral part of the subject of inquiry in the human and cultural sciences. It is not quite the case in the natural sciences. Even though the human subject is implicated in natural scientific inquiry through the processes of selection, judgement and evaluation, it is thought that the object of study can be handled separately. Lukacs questions sociological inquiry which takes for granted the separation of object and subject. The same basis for critique is laid on mechanistic materialism and the upholding of natural science as the model of all knowledge.

In History and Class-Consciousness (1971) Lukacs



argues for the proletariat as the identity of subject-object. Only the proletariat, because of its position, is capable of grasping the totality of society. It was Lukacs's hope that in the revolutionary proletariat the dichotomy of subject-object, subjectivity-objectivity would be overcome. Lukacs's view has implications for "praxis". He posits the unity not only of subject and object but also of theory and practice. The proletariat, by his actions in class struggle, attains consciousness of the whole of society. Conversely, the only way to achieve self-consciousness is through active struggle.

In Williams, there is no such naive hope. Rather Williams retains a vision of an integrated science: a ontological unity of the empirical and cultural sciences. The implications of such a unity are discussed in the chapter that follows. Here I just want to point out those aspects of the Lukacsian problematic that Williams accepts or rejects.

For Lukacs, even science cannot escape the process of reification. The principal concept in History and Class-Consciousness is reification. In the essay "Reification and Consciousness of the Proletariat", as Leiss points out, Lukacs sets out the

... bold thesis, stated at the outset -- that the "problem of commodities" should be seen as "the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects" -- made "the reification produced by commodity relations" the keystone of the theory of

consciousness in the larger conception that predicted the downfall of capitalism (Leiss, 1983:11).

Leiss elucidates the unresolved underlying tension in Lukacs "between the rationalization of life and the spirit of "autochthonous communalism" (Leiss, 1983:12). He argues convincingly that Lukacs's concept of reification "is founded on this tension and fails to resolve it" (1983:12). Lukacs fails to deal with the contradiction immanent in the rationalization process. The trajectory of rationalization, wherein reification reigns, is opposite to the trajectory of communalism or community. Here is a critical difference within the epistemological dimensions of Lukacs's and Williams's problematic, yet with similar implications.

Lukacs puts his hopes on the subject-object unity. For him the possibility of unity is located in the proletariat. In Lukacs's reasoning it follows that it is this group -- the proletariat -- and this group only, who has the objective possibility to overcome the divisive subject-object dichotomy; to overcome the rift that is the consequence of reification; to loosen the chains that bind by revolution. For Williams this is not a viable solution to the subject-object theory-practice chasm. The political naivete of Lukacs is starkly apparent. Williams's thought takes another turn.

With respect to science, Williams posits a

subject-object unity at the epistemological level following the thinking of Timpanaro (1975) by conjoining the physical sciences and the human sciences. Williams rejects any divisiveness between material and ideal, between nature and culture, and between cultural science and natural sciences. It is within this unity that there is an unresolved duality, really a contradiction, in Williams's epistemology. It is as if Williams's latest "emphasis now seems to produce a new circularity in which all elements of the social order are equal because they are all material" (1979B:350).

Williams posits a unity of the cultural science and the natural sciences without the deliberations of what this entails. One cannot resolve contradictions simply by positing a material-ideal unity. The cultural science/natural science dichotomy is not a false duality. The aims of the natural sciences and the human cultural sciences differ: respectively, the one tends towards explanation and control; while the other, towards understanding and communication. The objects of study differ. A degree of objectivity can be attained in the chemical or physical realm that cannot in the human. Perhaps at best, there can be only partial identity of subject-object, as Goldmann advises. The methodologies necessarily differ. While mathematics is the exemplar in the physical sciences, it hardly does justice to human and cultural phenomena.

It is such issues that Williams neither observes nor contends with; he simply comprehends both "observational" science and human and cultural science within his total "system of culture". This is an issue I will elaborate on in the following chapter.

With respect to society the underlying tension "between the rationalization of life and the spirit of autochthonous communalism" which Leiss points to in Lukacs is implicated in Williams's thinking. Williams still holds to an holistic meliorative vision. He writes most recently,

Thus there are profound interconnections in the whole process of production - that version of relations with others and with the physical world - to which the now dominant social orders have committed themselves. The way forward is in the neglected, often repressed but still surviving alternative, which includes many conscious interventions in a constituted nature but which selects and directs these by a fundamental sense of the necessary connections with nature and of these connections as interactive and dynamic. This can emerge, in practice, only if it is grounded in a conception of other people in the same connected terms (1983D:263).

This statement reflects the desire for connection, community and communication Williams advocates. It is "conscious intervention" and a "sense of necessary connections" that Williams deems necessary at this stage of advanced technological capitalist society. In face of the commodity form and reification carried to its logical limits, Williams's alternatives are connoted by such ideas as "informed reason and

inquiry"; "a new orientation of livelihood rather than simply production"; and "co-operative" caring relationships" (1983D:243-269). Implied is faith in the rational to overcome the dire tendencies towards reification or objectification (i.e. "informed reason and inquiry" and critical analysis). Also implied is faith in communalism (i.e., "co-operative caring relationships"). Yet the tendencies in rationalization and communalism move in opposite directions. Neither reason (inquiry, or analysis) nor efforts to co-operative intervention (as exemplified in the Women's Movement, the Ecology Movement, the Disarmament Movement) seem to have any effect on irrationality expressed in violence, terrorism, bloody wars or the arms race. The rational-irrational polarity appears as the ultimate contradiction in today's society.

In summary, in line with Lukacs is Williams's humanist, historicist world view; a dialectical epistemology with undertones of the life-experiential; the material dialectic methodology; two key theoretical Lukacsian concepts, speciality and generality; and a substantive interest in literary and aesthetic criticism as it relates the other spheres of organization -- the social, political and economic. The dualism that characterizes Williams's problematic derives from his experiential material ground and from a dual intellectual inheritance. From the literary influences there is an idealist dimension that tends to

that tends to persist. From the Marxist influence there is a complicated materialist-dialectical mix: a humanist-historical-materialism (i.e. Lukacs, Gramsci) merges with elements from an anti-humanist, anti-historical materialism) (i.e. Althusser). Whereas Eagleton points to the idealist phenomenological tendency, Barnett counterpoints and sees the culturalist inclination. In fact Barnett is more on the mark by suggesting that indeed Williams's problematic is a particular blend of idealist-materialist formulations (1976:63).

In veering away from the idealist intellectual beginnings, it is possible (as the New Left Review editors imply) that Williams now makes the error of steering off his straightened path and falling into a "new materialism". The nature, scope and depth of Williams's cultural materialism is questioned next.

## NOTES

## 1. These texts include:

The full printing of "The German Ideology"; the entire doctoral thesis, "Difference between Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature"; "Contribution to the Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law"; "The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844"; "Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy" (Grundrisse); and Engels's "Dialectic of Nature" (Kolakowski, 1978:5).

## 2. See paper by Bryant (1982) on the development of the "New Left" and Williams's relation to this formation.

## 3. Following Fekete, I use the term "commotion" rather than "conjuncture". The dynamic implication of "commotion" is preferred over the static "conjuncture" (Fekete, 1978:223).

## 4. Meszaros advises that Lukacs's prolonged concerns with the problems of dialectics stem largely because of the dominance of "vulgar Marxism", the "glorification" of mechanistic materialism and because Lukacs perceived the need to defend the validity of Hegel's dialectical methodology (Meszaros, 1972:13).

## 5. I touch on only a few of the implications of Lukacs's dialectical method at the risk of oversimplification. As Meszaros puts it: "to give a detailed account of his ideas on the various aspects of dialectic are quite impossible in view of the fact that his work - the result of seven decades of feverish activity - runs into many thousands of pages and embraces an enormous variety" (Meszaros, 1972:14). The constraints in this work are even more stringent as Lukacs is not the center of attention.

## 6. Referring to essays written in the 1930's -- "The Young Hegel", and "On the Relations between Dialectic and Economics" -- Meszaros writes, "The central notion that guides both these essays and emerges from them in an increasingly more concrete form is the concept of "specific". Its universal philosophical equivalent - "mediation" - has been repeatedly tackled in the preceding period

(Meszaros, 1972:56).

7. Lukacs makes the distinction between critical and socialist realism. All great writers who portray a realistic picture of the world no matter what their world outlook can be identified as critical realists. Balzac, Scott, Tolstoy are cases in point (Kolakowski, 1978:292).
8. Parkinson's offers an interpretation. He writes, ... to call the proletariat the identical subject-object is not to say that it has grasped the whole truth about society, but rather that it, and it alone, is capable of grasping that truth (1970:11). And in Jameson's view, "History and Class Consciousness" is not as much a political work as an epistemological one. Lukacs aims at developing a Marxist theory of knowledge. A key concept "class consciousness" is class based and is neither a psychological nor Durkheimian sociological term (Jameson, 1971:182).



## Chapter 6

### Cultural Materialist Problematic: Epistemology

If Faust could have two souls within his breast, why should not a normal person unite conflicting intellectual trends within himself changing from one class to another in the middle of a work crisis? (George Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, Preface to the New Edition, 1967).

#### The Idealist Moment

The genesis of the idealist tendency of Williams's epistemology has already been elucidated. In chapter three the experiential line in Williams's thought was drawn. Williams's own definition is taken as a legitimate expressive level of interpretation. The conditions of the dualism immanent in Williams's works are present in his lived experience. To review, these are: a dual class position -- working class and Cambridge intellectual elite; a dual geographical experience -- country and city; Wales and England -- a dual national and cultural set of attitudes, values, beliefs, sentiments, ways of seeing and doing; Welsh and English -- a dual linguistic heritage and expressive/symbolic mode; a dual religious orientation -- church and chapel; and a dualism within the persona of his father, that "significant other". At times, both figuratively and in reality, Williams crosses over, retreats or gets stuck at "the border" of these dualisms.

1

In chapters four and five, Williams's dual intellectual formation, the literary and the Marxist, is traced. In the 1940's the poverty of the Marxist thought of the Stalin era was no match for the triadic power of Eliot, Richards and Leavis. Though selective and critical, Williams is influenced by the dominant literary tradition. Conceptually idealist barnacles are attached: notions of "community", "sensibility", "structure of feeling" and "organic holism".

It is not sheer accident that Williams finds an affinity with Lukacs as he moves definitively to the Marxist discourse. In Lukacs, Williams finds both the idealist and the materialist categories of thought that he has been searching for, in Fekete's terms, a point of "commotion". As I pointed out (see chapter five), Lukacs has not resolved the basic tension, as indicated by Simmel and recently by Leiss (1983) with respect to the "rational-communal" conflict in socialist thought.

From an epistemological perspective the "rational-communal" tension implicates scientific knowledge. In Lukacs's analyses scientific knowledge is the dominant mode of knowing in a capitalist society. The hypothetico-deductive, analytic, experimental, empirical method of science; the abstractive nature of mathematizing; the search for general laws stands in homologous relationship to the capitalist mode and the ever-increasing techno-rationalization. Lukacs's

resolution of the "rational-communal" conflict lies in his hopes for the revolutionary proletariat.

Williams, on the other hand, finds a complementarity in comprehending both the natural scientific and the human and cultural sciences by accepting both in his holistic vision, and by suggesting a "cross-matching" procedure. In addition to the idea of "cross-matching", Williams's vision of totality is described as a metaphor of "solution". The totality is a "solution" wherein various levels are totally dissolved at times, and are "precipitates" which are observable at other times. It is these notions of "cross-matching" and of "solution" that require examination.

#### The Materialist Moment

Williams expounds on his ideas of materialism in his paper, "Problems of Materialism" (1980C:103-124). His source is the work of Sebastiano Timpanaro (1975). Aside from disagreeing with one basic position in Timpanaro, Williams says:

I find, nevertheless, so close a convergence of interests and sympathies that it is not only an exceptional pleasure to read his books, but important to try to engage with them (1980C:105).

He finds close accord with Timpanaro.

Williams begins his materialist explication with a

simple definition of materialism which "rests on a rejection of presumptive hypotheses of non-material or metaphysical causes and defines its own categories in terms of demonstrable physical investigations" (1980C:103). He points out that the intent to establish "scientific socialism" in Marxism has evoked contending views such that,

... there can be confusion between certain frozen forms and certain kinds of political commitment, and action: a confusion that reached bizarre extremes in identification of socialism with selected received generalizations - the brutal equation of certain (material) 'laws' with certain (political) loyalties. [with the consequence that.]... necessary processes of investigation and reinvestigation, over a range from political strategies to philosophical problems and cultural practices, were either dismissed, within the verbal categories, as 'anti-materialist' or 'idealist', or were, by the proponents themselves, in reaction against the frozen forms and their political and cultural consequences, carefully distanced from materialism or the more convenient 'vulgar materialism' (1980C:104).

Two main problems and confusions resulted. Scholars were inclined to accept either a materialist or an anti-materialist perspective. The prevailing logic was either-or. The materialists tended to view the economic as the "material base and all else as superstructural, immaterial, epiphenomenal or superfluous. The anti-materialists tended to reject this rigid orthodox or so-called "vulgar materialism" and simplistic economic determinism.

Lukacs is the exemplar of the anti-materialist

stance. As I have previously indicated, he envisioned the proletariat to be a resolution of the either-or positions and effect a subject-object unity. Goldmann, following Lukacs finds a degree of reconciliation of the either-or stance in positing a partial identity of subject-object.

Williams dismisses the either-or logic. He imputes a false separation between subject-object; subjectivity-objectivity; and the natural and physical sciences - the human and cultural sciences, etc. His entire oeuvre is devoted to resolving false dualities: city and country; culture and nature; base and superstructure; material and immaterial, and others. Following Timpanaro, he puts forth some provocative considerations on his materialist perspective with respect to: (1) nature and man; (2) biology and culture; (3) psychoanalysis and psychology; and (4) language and science.

In my view, Williams's duality reconciliation goes too far.<sup>2</sup> With respect to the epistemological dimension the dichotomy between the natural and physical sciences and the human and cultural sciences is not a false dualism but a true contradiction. It is in a reconsideration of Williams's materialist views that the contradiction in his problematic can be elucidated.

Man and Nature. Williams obviates an implicit separation between man and nature. In his view the linguistic structure imposes a false separation. The

speech act, saying "man and nature", suggests that man is separate from nature. By implication, the same can be said for the idea of "man or nature." Like Timpanaro, Williams is no crass materialist (see Soper, 1979:62). In Williams's thinking there is no room for separate abstract categories of man or nature either falsely equivalent, or by way of historical process, man as a substitute for nature. For Williams, it is always "man-in-nature".

The idea of "man-in-nature" presupposes necessary conditions. "Nature" or the "external situation" modulates what is already an interactive situation. Williams points out that there are legitimate dimensions quite beyond us:

To re-emphasize, as a fundamental materialism, the inherent physical conditions - a specific universe, a specific planet, a specific evolution, specific physical lives - from which all labour and all consciousness must take their origins, is right and necessary (1980C:108).

Williams acknowledges that Timpanaro is correct to point out these necessary conditions. Williams also points out that in Timpanaro there is a tendency towards passivity which he cannot accept. There is the implication in Timpanaro that the external situation is determining: that the external situation imposes itself on us and is beyond our control. In Williams's view, in the face of "nature" looming large, there are varying responses to be made depending on what is per-

ceived, selected and interpreted. Of course, there are instances over which there is a degree of passivity. We do not yet have full control over such forces as volcanic eruption, the vagaries of hurricane and flood or aging and death. Still, in the face of these forces we have choices. There are two dominant choices in our reactions: a pessimist version and a triumphalist version.

The pessimist version is typified in the existential response to the human condition: anguish, isolation, absurdity. Carried further it is exemplified in the nihilist response: apocalypse, disembodiment, abstract power, objectification.

The triumphalist version is typified in the Marxist response to the human condition: comradeship and love; solidarity and relatedness; utopian visions of a future community.

In both bourgeois and Marxist thought, Williams suggests, is a triumphalist response. Both proscribe man's mastery over nature. The capitalist bourgeois response carries with it the imperialist imperative. Nature is seen as limitless to conquer. Through science and technology the labour process is bent on the transformation of raw materials. The Marxist also emphasize mastery over nature. 'In Engels, science is both knowledge and control (1939:241-243). Scientism is neither the prerogative of the bourgeois capitalist nor the Marxist. There is the assertion in Williams's

thinking that science in itself is not ideological. Science under capitalism comes under the productive forces and uses of the capitalist, whereas science under socialism comes under the uses of the socialists. Each have different ends and purposes in practice.

To sum up, Williams's materialist position rests on three assumptions that: (1) there is no room for separated abstract categories of man and nature, man or nature, man over nature; (2) it is "man-in-nature" with labour as the specifying instance of an always significant, always dynamic, and always -- though differentially -- limited set of relationships; and (3) there is a need for an associated science and labour under conditions to be achieved by socialist transformation of control of the means of production. How then are these assumptions played out with respect to such tensions as biology vis-a-vis culture, the individual and the collective, physical sciences vis-a-vis the human and cultural sciences, psychoanalysis and experimental psychology; and in language?

Biology-Culture. Williams takes as his starting point Timpanaro's warning of the dangers inherent in either biological determinism or historical-cultural determinism. In Williams's view, elements of biological conditions are mediated by socio-historical experience and by cultural forms. There is a biology-culture mix. If we take the example of the production of culture, as Williams does, art is always a human



creation; art is always made. His work, Culture (1981C), which is a prime example of this unity, is fully explicated in the following chapter. Reduction either to biological conditions or to social-historical conditions is false. Art is always both an idealist and materialist process. Ideas and material mix in "art-making". In music, dance, the plastic arts and the literary arts, the physical aspects combine with the ideational. The biological process is not a substratum, but at times the most powerful feature of the art-work. Voice and musical instrument; body language; stone, metal -- whatever in sculpture; paint, canvas; paper and book are totally intertwined with ideas of artists and their labour. Williams is convincing in explicating the biology-art dualism as false. He provides a wide array of general concepts which help in orienting our thinking towards this unity of biology and culture (Culture, 1981C). What is lacking are more definitive concepts in areas other than drama, the area used to exemplify. What is lacking, above all, is a methodological approach to cultural forms or cultural practices. I begin to address some of these omissions in chapter eight.

Biology: the Individual, the Social. Reflecting on the relations between our material base or physical conditions and individual being, Williams acknowledges a complex contradiction. The stark reality finds that,

...life is not only negated by death but affirmed by birth, and practical consciousness itself at once defines and redefines its proper limits (1980C:116).

In Williams's view, a truly materialist standpoint, rejects the either-or of the pessimist or triumphalist positions. However, a fusion of material-ideal in the case of "the individual" and of "the social" is not a simple resolution. It is not a simple false duality.

Like Timpanaro, Williams stresses the importance of the "infra-infrastructure of biological": illness, old age, death. Neither Timpanaro nor Williams fall into a rigid naturalism or biologism whereby biology is considered destiny. Both accede that biology is socially mediated. However, Williams's theorizing, like Timpanaro's, lacks important epistemological distinctions. At stake are some very important and contemporary issues. Questions of sexism and racism are exemplary. Soper in her critique of Timpanaro asserts that,

...it is how these [somatic] instincts are satisfied, the value conferred on particular physical attributes, the ways in which physical strength is harnessed, the forms in which sexual division is lived and experienced, that are central to any understanding of the concrete effects of these determinations: it is these social features that are in a real and important sense render the natural a cultural product (1979:78).

Williams is particularly silent with respect to the sexual division and to questions of racism wherein some

physical attributes (i.e. gender attributes or skin color) are valued and others are not. Williams's theory of the "sociology of culture" focuses on the social production and reproduction of cultural form but not on the human form. Again Soper makes the key point. Her critique of Timpanaro is applicable to Williams. She writes,

It is therefore desirable, to avoid confusion, and to escape the circle of polemical dispute between a biologicistic reduction on the one hand and a socialistic reduction on the other, to introduce certain epistemological distinctions that will delineate between different objects of investigation and give a more precise definition to terms, such as 'biological', 'social', 'biology', 'society' that have hitherto tended to remain ambiguous in status (1979:79).

Clearly animal biology differs from human biology and social biology differs again. To take up the point once again from Soper: What is needed in Williams's theorizing are epistemological distinctions which "differentiate between levels at which one has knowledge of what is a single ontological unity" (Soper, 1979:62). To assert as Williams does that: there is no room for separated abstract categories of man and nature, man or nature, man over nature; that we must view the relationship as man-in-nature and within a socialist control of means of production is fine at general and abstract level. It is not fine at other levels of human existence and at levels of intergroup

relations (i.e. male-female; Black-White etc.). Williams's hypothesizing -- general and abstract as it is -- glosses over some very necessary distinctions. What general determinations mean for men and women interacting under conditions of production -- socialist or capitalist -- requires specification.

The problem of abstract generality at the epistemological level of Williams's problematic is highlighted by considerations of the cultural penetration of human material differences as the examples of sexism and of racism illustrate. Williams's metaphor of "solution" or mixture also misses the mark when it comes to the materiality of social being, either sexually or racially. It is not that Williams's idea of solution is a simplistic one. As a signifying system, Williams advises that culture -- in terms of institutions, practices, works -- is a set of complex relations:

The key to these relations turns twice. It activates these relations by insisting that signifying practice is deeply present in all those other activities, while preserving the distinction that in those others quite different human needs and actions are substantially and irreducibly present: the necessary signification, as it were, more or less completely dissolved into other needs and actions. It then activates the relations in an opposite direction, by insisting that those other needs and actions are deeply present in all manifest signifying activities, while preserving the distinction that in these practices those other needs and actions are, in their turn more or less completely dissolved (1981:209).

In the simplest terms, -- by "turn the key" once -- Williams means to explicate the "signifying system" as relatively autonomous, as a matter of degree. The degree of autonomy is one to be determined empirically for each practice, institution or need. To "turn the key" twice, is to realize that the "signifying system" is dissolved within larger systems -- economic, social, political, ideological, generational and so on. These transformations are exemplified in the case of money, dwellings, clothes, modern communication systems and the whole range of arts. Williams does specify or at least points to specifications in the realm of the arts, specifically, the dramatic arts, as exemplified in his work Culture (1981C). Yet I do not think that there is a simple transference from the realm of the arts to the realm of human interactions.

In his challenge to the entire premise of the "mode of production", Jean Baudrillard makes a salient point. Because it is important I quote at length. Baudrillard finds that our culture has produced,

the radical distinction of the masculine and the feminine with the "racial" inferiorization and sexual objectification of the feminine. No culture but ours has produced this systematic abstraction in which all the elements of symbolic exchange between the sexes have been liquidated to the profit of a binary functionality. And this separation, which has taken on all its force with capitalist political economy, is not reabsorbed at the present time. Sexual hyperactivism, equalization of the sexes, "liberation of desire", in short, the "Sexual Revolution", gives only the illusion of

symbolic destructuring under the sign of sex as a differential mark, as an index of status and as a function of pleasure. It is this mark that the women's revolt (or the gay liberation) aims at, not the claims, democratic and rationalist of political or sexual rights to equality (the equivalent of the salary claims of the worker). Not the accession of women to power, that is, the turning of the code to their favor, but the abolition of the code. Marxism has either ignored this subversion of the political economy of sex, that is, the imposition of the law of value in the sexual domain, the imposition of the phallus, the masculine as the general sexual equivalent, or else it has "dialectically" subordinated it to economic contradictions, allowing all of its radicality to escape.

The same observations hold for racial discrimination. No other culture besides ours has produced the systematic distinction of Black and White. And this distinction applies not as an after-thought but as a structural element which is reproduced even more dynamically today under the appearances of faltering liberal universalism. And the objectification of the Black as such is not that of exploited labour power, but an objectification by the code. One can easily verify that it is sustained by a whole arsenal of significations, irreducible to economic and political determinations. The emancipated or embourgeoisified Black remains a Black, just as the proletarianized immigrant remains first of all an immigrant, as the Jew remains a Jew. Again the code re-emerges with more violence in everything that would seem to suppress it. In Marxist terms, the superstructure is imposed with more force as the contradictions connected to the infrastructure are resolved, which is to say the least paradoxical. Hence again, the autonomization of the Black as the principle of revolution, as well as the autonomization of women as sex or of the proletariat as class only renews the racial or sexual code, the game of political economy, simply by displacing the marked term (emphasis, this author, Baudrillard 1975:135,136).

At its crux, Baudrillard is saying that no matter how

we alter the relations of production, we have not begun to touch intergroup relations, ethnic relations, sexual relations etc. Williams has not begun to contend with dominance and subordination along intergroup lines or sexual lines. Williams has not begun to deal with the representations of these relations, that is, their symbolic objectifications.

Williams raises the question within the framework of production and reproduction. He asks the question: in the face of birthing, aging, death and dying, what is the individual response to social projects or what is individual action? Williams leaves us pondering. He offers no resolutions to the contradiction between the individual and the social; between unity of our human species and diversity. He has not even begun to consider relations of domination and subordination outside of the framework production and reproduction. It is simply not a question within his problematic.

Psychoanalysis and Materialism. The contradiction between the materiality of individual being and social being is preparatory for the contradiction -- unresolved -- with respect to the knowledges of psychoanalysis and experimental psychology.

Williams finds in Timpanaro a trenchant critique of psychoanalysis. He says that, "If at times it reads like taking a sledge-hammer to a nut, we do not have to read very far elsewhere to find how many nuts there are" (1980C:117). Though Timpanaro's hammer hits hard,

it is still questionable. In Williams's view, if we take Freudian psychoanalysis as the received tradition and in particular errors and failures of memory (i.e. Freudian slips):

If this is set beside the now very extensive physiological investigation of the processes of memory and especially short term memory, we reach a fully materialist position in which the evidence of cultural history, of situational analysis and of physiological investigation can be brought together and cross-checked (1980C:117).

The fully materialist position that is programmatic in Williams's statement requires careful consideration. At the surface, it seems perfectly reasonable, perfectly desirable to "cross-check" findings from psychoanalytic, historical-cultural, empirical-situational and experimental-psycho-physiological study. Yet after due consideration, Williams admits that neither Timpanaro nor he has found a way out of the differential findings, methodological procedures, or the conceptual and theoretical problems that are raised. Williams argues that it is both "wholly unreasonable" to assert complementarity between a materialist Marxist position and a Freudian idealist one and then refuse to take account of the body of findings from experimental psychology on the basis that they are positivist or empiricist in orientation.

This is an attractive argument, but until the methodological, theoretical and conceptual problems are



dealt with, it remains an ideal prospectus that is quite fitting with Williams's interests to resolve false dualisms. Here though, is not a false dualism, but a false holism. I find as much as I would like to embrace a holistic horizon in the fashion that Williams commends, a basic contradiction persists.

In practice how do we proceed to "cross-check" Freudian psychoanalytic findings with Skinnerian-type experimental psychology? We are faced with the unresolved problem of cross-matching two different epistemologies; two different ways of knowing; two different interests; two different objects. In experimental psychology, the ideal of knowledge is patterned after the physical sciences with mathematics and physics as the model. Division, experimentation, observation, laboratory control, mathematical rigour are the modalities. The research-guiding interests are explanation and control; the objects of study are physical, material and objective manifestations. Along the subjectivity-objectivity continuum, objectivity is the goal to a large degree.

In psychoanalytic psychologies, the ideal of knowledge is patterned after the human and cultural sciences with language as the model. Holism, history, language, meaning and interpretation are the modalities. The research-guiding interests are understanding, communication and critique. The objects of study are spiritual, literary and philosophical, and

are not necessarily objectively manifest. They can at best be apprehended by a partial identity of subject-object. The human as subject and as object of study occludes clear-cut objectivity. Language as the model occludes a clear-cut ruling-measure in comparison with the mathematical measure. The use of language with all its multi-dimensional complexity to examine linguistic phenomena is caught circling in a solipsism.

Language and Science. In his considerations on language and science, Williams takes a similar stance. He conjoins, again programmatically, the structural semiotic with the historical cultural. By so doing he brings into juxtaposition the diachronic and the synchronic; the literary-philosophical and the natural-scientific. Williams makes a case for the questioning of the relations not only between the "literary-philosophical" and the "natural-scientific",

...but the complex relations of both to the socio-historical culture and process: relations, moreover, which cannot be reduced to the terms of a base-superstructure formula (1980C:121).

It is towards a "productive materialism", a "cultural materialism" that Williams is inclined.

But is this sufficient? Williams leaves us with the lofty vision but without the means of making the climb or traversing the abyss. He leaves us with a number of yawning gaps between the micro and macro

levels of practice (i.e. the analyses of text and context); the form and social formation; between the movement from specific to general; between the structural (semiotics) and the historical (materialism); the reductive and the expansive. This disjunction between the experimental psychologies and the psychoanalytic, between structural linguistics and historical are cases in point of the more general hiatus between the physical and human and cultural sciences. The disjunction is rooted within Williams's own epistemology. He embraces dual ways of knowing, both an idealist and materialist moment, but he leaves us with the contradictions.

The problem is deeper. It is not contradiction per se, but that within Williams's frame of reference -- his thought, style -- contradictions are not problematic. He creates no space within his vision of totality for the epistemological contradictions within his materialist formulations. As with Lukacs the natural science/human cultural science dichotomy is not resolved. In Williams is a lack of specification, a lack of articulation, a lack of reflection on this most basic aspect of "knowledges".

Both the idealist and materialist dimensions immanent in Williams's thought and work certainly makes for complexity, but profundity as well. In the preceding it was the epistemological level of Williams's problematic that was probed. On examination

of Williams's epistemology -- his ground of knowledge -- it is not merely an idealist-materialist dualism that can be reconciled. There is a basic contradiction at the site of Williams's materialism; one that cannot lightly be resolved or thought of as a mere or a transitory moment.

Williams's idea of culture -- from a cultural materialist standpoint -- implicates a theory of knowledge which posits a single order with a mixture of ontologically separate components which are never purely cultural, never purely material, never purely natural, never purely social. While at a generalized level this understanding is an advance over separated abstracted constructs, it conceals the need for differentiation.

It is necessary to further probe Williams's Marxist position -- "cultural materialism". As a construct, there is a "cultural" component and a "material" component. But is the construct an additive one or a combinatory one? What kind of relation is there between "culture" and "material"? Either an additive or a combinatory construct implies that each component has some existential status. Williams specifies that,

The metaphor of solution is crucial to this [Williams's] way of looking at culture, and the qualifier 'more or less' is not a casual phrase but a way of indicating a true range, in which relatively complete and relatively incomplete degrees of solution,

either way, can be practically defined (1981C:209).

And so, the idea of solution is not an additive one. By definition solution, means (1) the act or process of dispersing one or more substances in another, usually a liquid, so as to form a homogeneous mixture; (2) a dissolving; (3) the state or fact of being dissolved; (4) a homogeneous molecular mixture, usually a liquid, so produced: as, a solution of sugar and water; (5) a separation or breaking up, as into component parts; dissolution: break; breach.

One cutting challenge to Williams's metaphor of "solution" comes from considerations of the most basic of human materiality, that of sexism and racism; two glaring silences on Williams's part. Soper's argument against Timpanaro is relevant here. She makes the case for distinctions to be made at "relatively low levels of abstraction": for "epistemological distinctions which differentiate between levels at which one has knowledge" (Soper, 1979:62). The need for epistemological distinctions become clear as Williams's ideas on the materiality of nature, art, the individual and the social, psychology and language are reconsidered.

A second cutting edge, the view from such thinkers as Baudrillard, challenges the very premises of Williams's entire problematic. Baudrillard critiques production and reproduction itself as ideology. Though in my view Baudrillard's implications and trajectory

goes too far off in a direction opposite to Williams, his critique, levied at an unconditional acceptance of production and reproduction, is valuable. It helps locate the false assumptions and omissions in Williams's problematic.

In now turning to Williams's work on the sociology of culture, I shall begin to address an aspect of his work where there are two important omissions: one, the development of constructs at lower levels of abstraction that can move analysis of the production and reproduction of culture forms from the general to the specific, and, of course, in the reverse; and two, specified strategies for the analysis of particular cultural forms. But first, what are Williams's formulations in the sociology of culture?

## NOTES

1. From a philosophical point of view it is interesting to note Ricoeur's observation that:

"It is very striking that it should be precisely the great dualisms of history which have most prized this unity, as if dualism were the philosophical test one had to pass through in order to conquer the true meaning of unity. Thus Plato strives to overcome the ascetic dualism of the *Phaedo* in a higher ontological unity, as one sees in *"Timaeus and the Philebus"*. Thus also, Descartes strives to overcome the methodological dualism of the *"Second Meditation"* in the concrete and practical unity of the person described in the *"Sixth Meditation"* and in the *"Treatise on the Passions"*. Once again, Kant wishes to overcome the opposition between practical reason and sensibility in the *"summum bonum"* at the end of *"Critique of Practical Reason"*. The great philosophies seem then to be caught up in a rhythmic cycle in which a defeat by dualism gives way to a victory over dualism" (in Reagan and Stewart eds., 1978:3). Williams seems to be caught up in this rhythmic cycle.

2. My position is closer in agreement with the philosophical one of Ricoeur in that explanation and understanding are not opposite mutually exclusive poles; but in disagreement with Williams in his zeal to fuse such modalities as one. Ricoeur has stated: "At first, the question is to know if the sciences, whether natural or human, constitute a homogeneous single continuum, or whether there must be an epistemological break between the natural and social sciences" (1978:149). Ricoeur's is a dialectical position in which, "explanation and understanding would not constitute mutually exclusive poles, but rather relative moments in a complex process called interpretation" (1978:150).

## Chapter 7

### Towards a Sociology of Culture: Synopsis and Commentary

The fullest, most recent and integrative development of Williams's theory of culture is expounded in his work Culture (1981C).<sup>1</sup> In characteristic centripetal fashion, Williams brings to this work some thirty years of his substantive work on drama. From the developing position of cultural materialism, Williams draws together a number of ideas from Marxist thinkers, significantly, Lukács, Gramsci, Goldmann and Althusser. While Williams does not make his methodology explicit, this work is a prime example of Williams's cultural materialist methodology. Because of the integration and the cumulative substantive, theoretical and methodological dimensions, this work is a centerpiece in Williams's problematic. It is largely from this work that a model of analysis for cultural practitioners and practices can be extrapolated (see the chapter following).

Williams makes clear the preliminary nature of the work. He asserts that,

All that now follows in this book, is presented in this sense: an inquiry and a set of working hypotheses ... rather than a body of demonstrated and verified conclusions (1981C:35).

We need to take this statement seriously. It is



indicative of the state of the art as a field of inquiry: the sociology of culture is in an early formative stage. Williams takes on the formidable task of mapping the field. In Williams's view, the sociology of culture must be concerned with the social relations of institutions and formations, the specific means of production and processes of reproduction, the specific art forms and identifications of such, the specific conditions and practices of social organization as they overlap with social, political, economic, ideological and other dimensions.

### Synopsis

#### I. The Social Relations of Artists: Institutions

In the area of institutions Williams identifies a number of social relations of production. In turn he provides an inventory of various institutional developments in the domain of culture in relation to changing modes of production from feudal times to the present. Two general sets of distinctions are made.

Williams proposes that there are:

1. - Variable relations between 'cultural producers' and recognizable social institutions

and

2. - Variable relations in which 'cultural producers' have organized themselves and their formations (1981C:35).

In historical perspective, four phases of relations are delineated: (1) Instituted Artists; (2) Artists and Patrons; (3) Artists and Markets; and (4) Post-market Institutions.

(1) Instituted Artists. This is a phase of 'specifically instituted artists' which emerges in earliest traditional societies, i.e. Greek, Roman, Celtic. A special place and function for the artist is evident, "After the very earliest period of non-differentiation of functions in which the 'literary' or 'artistic' had not fully separated out from the more generally 'cultural' ..." (1981C:38). The Celtic bards -- poet, composer, singer -- illustrate the point. Particular artists, usually poets, are an integral part of the general organization of the traditional Celtic society, yet with specialized functions which were different from the priest or prophet. As Williams proposes,

The distinction of these functions was in part a result of their internal development, as each function required more skill and time. But it was also, and perhaps primarily, a result of more general changes in social organization and in the mode of production (1981C:36, 37).

Both internal developments and external ones are thus implicated in the social relations of artists.

(2) Artists and Patrons.. Williams draws out the development of variable relations between artists and patrons and the various kinds of support: retainers,

commission and sponsorship. Within sponsorship, a number of variable relations are identified. For example, commercial sponsorship persists in societies wherein commodity and market relations become dominant (1981C:42).

(3) Artists and Markets. It is the commodity-form of relations that become primary in post-feudal societies. In dealing with artists and both the market and postmarket institutions, Williams writes that,

Production for the market involves the conception of the work of art as a commodity, and of the artist, however else he may define himself, as a particular kind of commodity product. But there are then crucially different phases of commodity production. All involve production for simple monetary exchange; the work is offered for sale and is bought and thus owned. But the social relations of artists involved partly or wholly in commodity production are in fact highly variable (1981C:44).

The artist in an artisanal relation functions as an independent producer who sells his work directly.

There are at least four postartisanal relations: one, the artist as producer sells the work to a distributive intermediary; and two, the artist as producer sells the work to a productive intermediary who makes an investment of the purchase for the profit motive. A third type of relation in market conditions is the market professional. For this artist producer the special laws of copyright and royalty are determinate. The fourth type, corporate professional,

is the artist associated with production in various media. In some cases, the artist producer is employed in the media corporation; in some, the artist producer is not employed but is commissioned to produce works. There is the tendency for those employed in the media business ("new media") to be salaried professionals and to work on a contractual basis.

(4) Postmarket Institutions. In the postmarket institutions three institutional relations may prevail: a modern patronal relation, government sustenance and some intermediate body. The modern patronal relation, a development in advanced capitalist societies, pertains when some arts, unable to be maintained, are made viable or sustained by such institutions as foundations, organizations of subscribers and/or private patronage. In between the modern patronal institutions and full government funded institutions are those institutions such as the Great Britain Arts Council or the B.B.C. which rely on government funding but are responsible for their own production. Full government funding is found in a number of capitalist and post-capitalist societies. In such situations, the cultural institutions, often modern media, are departments of the state. The extent to which the producers are then relatively independent or subordinated to state policy varies. The variance of autonomy is a question that is taken up further in the consideration of reproduction of cultural production.

Gloss 1<sup>2</sup>

By taking an historical perspective Williams identifies a variety of social relations vis-a-vis various modes of production diachronically. Though specific relations appear to emerge within particular sets of economic relations, they then do not disappear: a variety of relations persist. The notions of "archaic", "residual", "dominant" and "emergent", which Williams identifies when discussing reproduction (1981C:203-205), can be usefully applied to the transformations of artists in a various array of institutional arrangements. For example, the artisanal relation, an archaic relation, can coexist along with dominant postmarket relations as it does in contemporary times.

Williams's initial proposition "that there are variable relations between 'cultural producers' and recognized social institutions" is a very general one, but moves the analysis in the direction of ascertaining the whole configuration of relations between institutions, cultural producers, the economic formation, cultural formations, the processes of production and reproduction, and the cultural form.

II. The Social Relations of Formations: Organizations, Movements

To move from the social relations of cultural production at the level of institutions more closely to

the actual cultural form, process and product, Williams proposes a more intermediate level of social relations, that of cultural formations. A number of early forms of organizations internal to various arts are discussed: guilds, academies, exhibitions, professional societies and movements.

Various movements "in which artists come together in common pursuit of some specific aim" have had a great impact on cultural developments (1981C:62). Often viewed as some "ism", school, or circle, these cultural formations are complex. They may be "independent", "breakaway groups" or "specializing groups" with particular internal organization and external relations. Often such groups, as "Godwin and his circle", the "PreRaphaelite Brotherhood" or the "Bloomsbury Group" are dissident or rebels or they may constitute a "fraction" of a class. It is not simply a listing of these various movements or schools or "isms" that is proposed, but a move towards the analysis of two factors: "...the 'internal organization' of the particular formation; and its 'proposed and actual relations to other organizations' in the same field and to society more generally" (1981C:68). This kind of relational analysis is an advance over an analysis which merely looks at these various formations as "styles". Williams provides a preliminary classification of internal organization and of external relations (1981C:68-71).

The range of formations is wide and includes simple and complex organizations, national or paranational formations. In positing formational analysis, Williams suggests a means of drawing closer to "direct social processes of cultural production", to the analysis of cultural forms (1981:86). This kind of formational analysis is at once complex and relatively new. The importance of formational analysis is that it cuts in two directions: one, towards a general history where social class and cultural formations are taken into account; and one, towards specific formations wherein the individuals who make up the formation, their position, interests, influence and actions are recognized. Williams makes the point that, "Formations of the more modern kinds maybe" seen to occur, typically, at points of transition and intersection within a complex social history..." (1981C:86).

## Gloss 2

In market and postmarket conditions the role of the mediating cultural producer looms large. In significant cultural areas, the single cultural producer no longer works alone. In theatre, cinema, modern broadcast productions, newspapers and magazines, group production is the model and ultimately requires coordination. The producer/director assumes a mediating role. Hired by a corporate body the producer/director is responsible to the corporation and

has responsibility over the production group writers, actors, technicians and musicians.

Just how the producer/director is involved in such cultural formations or other organizations; just how this kind of formation has an impact on the cultural form is open to question and empirical study. The concept of formation is comprehensive and makes space for the widest range of social organization: guilds, academies, exhibitions, professional societies, "movements". Within movements, there is a great deal of variation: 'schools', 'independents', 'breakaway groups', specializing groups. Formations constitute complex configurations. For example, independent formations have a web of external relations and internal organization. The concept of formations also comprehends "fractions", "dissidents", "rebels", as well national formations. Here, too, Williams offers a panorama of variegated social relations and modes of organizations. What is important is that it is this level of formation that is the structure within which cultural forms are produced. Formational analysis bridges the gap between general history and associations and between general history and particular arts.

Williams's contribution here too is general: an inventory of types of formations. He points the way to formational analysis and the value of such a thrust. The mediating cultural producer is the link to



positions of power and control and to the creation of cultural products.

### III. Means of Production

From an historical vantage point, Williams explicates the close connections between the means of production and the relations and production. The means of production involves both natural human resources and technical non-human means. He identifies a number of power relations and some changes over time in conditions of capitalist society; i.e., various types of control. He points to the new forms that are evolving and stresses the importance of recognizing the materiality of culture. As he asserts:

... whatever purposes cultural practice may serve, its means of production are unarguably material. Indeed, instead of starting from the misleading contrast between 'material' and 'cultural', we have to define two areas for analysis: first, the relations between these material means and the social forms within which they are used... and, second, the relations between these material means and social forms and the specific (artistic) forms which are a manifest cultural production ... (1981C: 87,88).

Development of Inherent Resources and Uses of Non-Human Means. Williams distinguishes between those material means constituting inherent human physical resources and those constituting the transformation of nonhuman material resources. By inherent human

physical resources he refers to the example of the achievement of language in its full complement, both verbal and nonverbal. There are, too, developments in such areas as dance, song and speech.

The materiality and power relations of the means of cultural production are often overlooked. With respect to non-human resources Williams identifies five types of practices:

- (i) combination of the use of external objects with the use of inherent physical resources, over a range from the use of paint, masks and costume in dance to the use of masks, costume and scenery in acted drama;
- (ii) development of instruments of new kinds of performance, as notably in musical instruments;
- (iii) selection, transformation and production of separable objects, which then carry cultural significance, as in the use of clay, metal, stone and pigment in sculpture and painting;
- (iv) development of separable material systems of signification, devised for cultural significance, as most notably in writing;
- (v) development of complex amplificatory, extending and reproductive technical systems, which make possible new kinds of presentation of all the preceding types, but also new kinds of presentation of practices still otherwise based on the use of inherent and constituted resources (1981C:90).

He points out that the first three types identified above coincide with those based on natural human (inherent) resources. A combination of human resources and developed technology are implicated in the fourth and fifth types. From the point of view of access, receiver or audience access, that is, for the first

three types, specialist training is no more difficult than what is required in the training of (inherent) human physical resources. For example,

If you are watching some highly developed dance form, or some elaborately staged drama, or listening to highly developed music, or looking at highly developed sculpture or painting, you have at least some given mode of access to each art. You can at least see or hear, which has been part of your ordinary physical development (1981C:92).

This is true even if it is access to art forms from other cultures. For types four (iv) and five (v),

On the other hand, as a culture becomes richer and more complex, involving many more artistic techniques developed to a high degree of specialization, the social distances of many practices becomes much greater, and there is a virtually inevitable if always complex set of divisions between participants and spectators in various arts (1981C:91).

The example of writing illustrates these complexities of access. For both the producer and the receiver, writing is entirely dependent on specialized teaching and learning. The dependence on specialized training has meant stratified access; not all in any society are literate. Literacy has meant positions of power for those who had access. It is well to realize, as Williams, notes that,

It is only in the last hundred and fifty years, in any culture, that a majority of people have had even minimal access to this technique which already, over two millennia,

had been carrying a major part of human culture (1981C:94, 95).

Literacy is a world-wide problem, though the dimensions differ for industrialized and industrializing countries and the ramifications for each are relative.

Developments of the fifth type, "the complex amplificatory, extending and reproductive technical systems", have effected qualitative and quantitative changes. The reproduction of images (seals, coins, medals); the reproduction of religious objects; the development of graphic reproduction (illustrations, woodcut designs in fabrics) have extended bases of power and control.

Social Effects of Reproductive Systems. The capabilities of a wide range of reproduction techniques has "radically affected the position of the writer, the scholar and the artist as producers" (1981C:97). Diversity in technical changes relates to changes in economic relations i.e. from patronal to market relations. Though quite unintended, "with this diversified, extended distribution and mobility, came new forms and opportunities of artistic and cultural independence" (1981C:98). Williams posits the following proposition between social and cultural production and reproduction, He asserts that,

The most important theoretical indication, from this series and complex of changes, is that of the variable degrees of symmetry between cultural production and general

social and cultural reproduction (1981C:98).

Variable degrees of symmetry in effect means variable degrees of power. Symmetrical relations characterize the earliest productive social orders; asymmetrical, the feudal, medieval periods followed by capitalist periods where domination and subordination appear. Williams identifies three areas where various types of asymmetry are major elements: (1) Controls and their limits; (2) State and market; and (3) Reproduced and popular culture.

- (1) Controls and their Limits. Here the tensions revolve around artistic freedom and modes of controls created. The development of various forms of control --censorship, licensing -- involves asymmetrical relations.
- (2) State and Market. The tensions between state control and market is only preceded by the former conflicts between church and state. An early example were the conflicts over newspapers and the issues around "official information" and obscenity. In some situations, the strength of the market and growth of liberal ideology prevailed over state controls. With the development of "the newest means of production and reproduction, above all cinema and television" came changes between the market and the institutions

(1981C:101). Changes in power relations were also the outcome.

- (3) Reproduced and Popular Culture. Reproduced and popular culture is the third area of asymmetry that Williams points to. He writes:

What is usually said about the invention of printing is that it greatly expanded an earlier minority culture, and at last made it into a majority culture. Yet it is here that we have to distinguish most clearly between a technical invention and a technology, and then further between a technology and its actual or possible social relations (1981C: 108).

Williams exemplifies with the case of writing and printing. Technical inventions of a script, an alphabet, paper, implicate production and distribution: that is, not only the means and forces of production, but relations of production. All the raw materials, instruments, equipment as well as the human skills and abilities, in a word, the means or forces of production, alter the social relations of production. The labour of the solitary scribe in the monastries or the clerk keeping records or preparing contracts no longer typifies the productive mode. With the possibilities of printing came an extended work force and ownership of large scale capital equipment -- printing presses, cutting machines, buildings, etc. The distribution of printed material was extended to the literate. Literacy skills became highly valued such that, "... the cultural but also the social

importance of the still oral majority culture declined" (1981C:109). Williams points out,

In many ways, as the technology and its altering social relations became more general, new forms and new areas of experience made their own way into print. The older coherence of a specialized literate culture was challenged alike by these genuine initiatives and by the eventually widespread reproduction and imputed popular material, in speculative and profitable works designed for an expansion seen not as a changing culture but as a new and decisive market (1981C:110).

Twentieth Century Cultural Production. Group production characterizes the new forms of cultural production. This phenomenon was noted with respect to radio, television or cinema. In earlier periods, drama, dance, choir, were the outcomes of group production, and these forms continue. But for a long while the individual author -- writer, painter, sculptor, printer, composer -- dominated and was authoritative. As Williams points out, "The root association of this word (author) with the sense of authority is not accidental; the conception of an "author" is of an autonomous source" (1981C:112). With the development of the new media forms since the turn of the century,

These changes, at their most general, are, first, the substantial development of the division of labour inside cultural processes and, second, forms of class division, related both to the specialized divisions of the process and to the ownership and management of the developed means of production (Williams, 1981C:113).

The division of labour inside cultural processes is now based on professional and "conscious management". Coordination becomes a necessity in the production of the new forms. As Williams points out,

There is no stabilized figure corresponding to the later producer or director, who does not really appear in theatre until the late nineteenth century ... The 'producer', 'director' or 'manager' emerged when wholly coordinated production not only of acting but of new staging techniques, including new kinds of design and lighting, was seen as necessary and desirable (1981C:113,114).

With the new reproductive techniques, principally cinema and television, came a redistribution of role and authority. Both extensive professional specialization and technical expertise created new division of labour. In cinema and television, writers, actors, musicians, designers, cameramen, sound technicians, editors, graphic artists and others were all required for production and could not function without coordination. Neither could the production begin or continue without the skills of such craftsmen or technicians as carpenters, to install or maintain the hardware of the production.

### Gloss 3

The specification of the means of production in post-market societal formation can be guided by the three dimensions that Williams maps out. In summary, they are: (1) the development of inherent resources and



the uses of non-human means; (2) the social effects of reproduction systems; and (3) the new forms of cultural production. At the center of the social relations of productive and reproductive systems are relations of power and control.

Both inherent human resources and non-human means need to be specified, particularly when it comes to the development of "new media". Broadcasting, for example, involves sophisticated developments in both inherent human and non-human resources. To augment this analysis, Williams's work on technology and societal relations should be added. For example, in his work on Television Technology (1974D) he develops the approach by focusing on the social history of the technology of television; the social history of its uses; and the types of early development.

The social relations of the means of production involves relations of class, power and cultural/material means: who is producing and reproducing any cultural form; the structure of the social relations involved; the asymmetrical qualities characterizing capitalist relations; and the particular constraints and controls on the cultural form. The cultural form is directly affected.

#### IV. The Cultural Form

"We now have the sociology ... but where is the art?" (1981C:119).

In the preceding summary of the three related aspects of the means of production of cultural form, the cultural form is implicated but is not dealt with. Williams points the way to the materiality of cultural production and its social relations. But what of the product, the cultural form itself? The crucial point is put by Williams in the opening paragraph of "Identifications" (1981C:Ch.5):

We can go a long way in the sociology of culture by studying cultural institutions, formations and means of production. But at some point we are bound to stop and ask if what we are studying, however important it may be in its own terms, is sufficiently central to its presumed subject. We now have the sociology; it is sometimes said, but where is the art? (1981C:119).

This is a central question; one that is fraught with complexities. For some, "art is produced for art's sake." From this perspective there is no other consideration. For others, art is a question of psychological, historical, philosophical, linguistic or sociological import. From this perspective there is no art; the art work is overshadowed by larger processes. Neither stance suffices. By way of questioning the boundaries of "the works of art themselves" (1981C:119) -- the identification of art -- Williams moves from these received either-or positions to new considerations.

Williams first questions what distinguishes "works

of art themselves": art as performance; art as quality; art as 'aesthetic' purpose. He then moves to consider the social processes of 'art', and art as social form with a special focus on the signals of art.

The Works of Art Themselves. Williams argues that we could and should go to 'the works of art themselves': "We can and often should stop reasoning about art, and go instead to look at a painting, listen to some music, read a poem" (1981C:119). This point must be emphasized: sociological inquiry is a different human activity. It involves a particular conceptual shift. Conceptually, writing a poem, reading a poem, and thinking critically about poetry are different activities. Williams underlines the argument when he writes,

It is one thing to leave sociological analysis and instead read a poem; it is quite another to leave socio-cultural analysis and forthwith adopt a socio-cultural category whose forms and terms ought, precisely, to be [the works of art] the object of analysis" (1981C:120).

Engaging in reasoning or critical thinking involves use of language and processes of categorization: "For 'the works of art themselves' is of course a category and not some neutral objective description" (1981C:120). Further, as Williams asserts, "...it is a socio-cultural category of the highest importance, but just because of this it cannot be empirically presumed" (1981C:120). What the above implies is the recognition

of distinctions. To identify all under "works of art" is to level out differences.

We readily recognize distinctions in "works of art". Music, dance, painting, sculpture, poetry, drama, fiction are all art, artistic practices that differ from other human practices. But while dance is art, Williams asks, is ballroom dancing art? How about ballet and folk dance? One can, distinguish art as it has been done, by focusing on performance, quality or aesthetics. If we distinguish art from non-art by performance we may have one category of distinction that is effective, but that still has major limitations. Drama and music can be distinguished by performance, but as Williams points out, what about cave-painting? If we distinguish art from non-art by its quality, there are also major limitations. In engineering there is quality but is there art?

Aside from questions of performance and quality, the aesthetics of art has been a category most used to distinguish art, at least since the 18th century. The aesthetic qualities of a work have been generally assessed in terms of beauty, harmony, proportion or form. Such categories can and have been used to ascertain the aesthetic qualities of art works. In Williams's view, this is not where the problems lie. It is rather in the reduction of the aesthetic qualities to specialization. In the "specialization of the 'aesthetic'", Williams proposes that,

The intractable problem is the presumed specialization of these 'perceptions'- [colour, form, harmony, rhythm, proportion, etc.] these processes and responses - to 'works of art'. For it is common to experience similar or comparable perceptions of the human body, of animals and birds, or of trees, flowers and the shapes and colours of the land (1981C:123).

While many art works are integrally related to our perceptions about the natural world, the aesthetic qualities of things of nature are not artistic creation. The aesthetics of artistic creation are not reducible to such specialization. There is the further problem of "marginal definition". To what extent does the aesthetic criterion apply to artistic works as it might to dress, ornament, furnishing, gardening. As Williams suggests, ".... many of the same criteria of beauty, harmony and proportion apply yet ... the full definition of 'art' is usually withheld, within the modern specialization" (1981C:124).

Related to the specialization problem of aesthetic categorization and the problem of marginal definition is the value, or the presumed value, of art. The crux of this problem is "that some works in a practice which has been specified as an art are 'not art' or 'not really art'" (1981C:124). Though some novels are deemed art, others are considered as 'pulp fiction', 'commercial trash' or 'sub-literature'. As Williams points out, "The terms are harsher in the more popular arts, but the tendency exists through the whole range"

(1981C:125).. A novel is art, but what about a "bad novel"? The judgements on popular culture or popular art are particularly complex. Films are part of commercial popular culture, but what about the high quality of some films? Some that do the circuit of the film festivals do not pander to crass commercialism. Again the distinctions made between high art and pop art do not hold for the art form of radio-drama. Though radio broadcasts are aired and geared to a large public is the broadcast of Shakespearian drama valued, or devalued, as popular? These kinds of problems are truly sociological. As Williams advises,

... we become more and more certain that we must refuse that beguiling invitation to leave aside 'sociological categories' and move to 'the works of art themselves'. Moreover we must refuse by a criterion often rhetorically invoked in these doubtful positions: by the criterion of the strictest intellectual coherence and rigour (1981C:125).

In the process of identifying "the works of art themselves" Williams raises questions with regard to aesthetic categorization. The boundaries are yet unclear with regard to maintaining the categories of "art as performance", "art as quality", and even the "aesthetics of art". Unwittingly the sociological categories enter the discourse on what some would deem a pure aesthetics.

#### \*Gloss 4

To what degree a culture or art-form functions as

an autonomous entity; to what degree it is subsumed by other practices; to what degree is there partial autonomy are questions that Williams raises, questions that require empirical study.

The identification of art as quality, the aesthetics of art and art as performance are all important dimensions under consideration. Involvement with these dimensions does not rule out the social historical perspective. Williams argues that the moment that there is a move from the actual process or the practice of artistic creation, we are into the realm of socio-critical thought. One is not reducible to the other. Williams makes this claim emphatically:

What matters is the evidence, in many thousands of processes and objects, of constant human practice in this real dimension, necessarily overlapping and interacting with other kinds of practice but never simply reducible to them (1981C:129).

Against rigid categorization; against unreal abstractions; against broad generalizations, Williams insists that the level of analysis is in the actual production "which is that of both general and specific cultural orders".

The Social Processes of 'Art'. As Williams underscores:

For what really becomes clear, as we review these effective categorizations, with all their problems and loose ends, is that the move away from the 'sociological' is precisely the move we cannot make ... The

In dealing with the social processes of 'art', Williams draws on the work of Lukacs and in particular the notion of specificity or specificities. In dealing with the arts as social forms, Williams examines the sociology of signal systems from an historical perspective. The contributions and limits of Formalism, Structuralism, and Genetic Structuralism are considered with respect to the internal signals of the art form, drama.

General Social Order, Specificity of Aesthetic Object. Williams draws on Lukacs's work on aesthetics to develop the relationship between general and specific cultural and social orders. In Die Eigenart des Aesthetischen (Frankfurt, 1969), Lukacs specifies three phases of human practice: (1) the "practical"; (2) the "magico-religious"; and (3) the "aesthetic". By practical, Lukacs refers to the realization of perceived human needs. The "magico-religious" category refers to a range of belief systems, at once "objectively real, transcendent and demanding belief" (Williams, 1981C:127). The "aesthetic" category then can be specified as something other than "practical" or "magico-religious". For Williams, the value of these Lukacsian distinctions is not to be taken rigidly. But rather,



It is indeed the relative integrity of these phases, in certain periods of human practice, which allows us to see certain subsequent specializations, in periods of altered general practice, as historical rather than categorical facts (and the theory of Lukacs, in terms, as idealist rather than historical-materialist (1981C:128)).

That Lukacs's categorization schema does not cover all diverse practices or that too many practices in practical, magico-religious or aesthetic realms overlap is not the main point or value of his contribution. Rather, Lukacs's bold attempt points out the direction for further articulation. The range and power of aesthetics can not nor should not be reduced to a single practice or single intention. Nor should aesthetics be reduced to either cultural or social phenomena. In Williams's view,

... the necessary distinctions are not to be found at the level of categorical separation but rather at the level where they are in fact produced, which is that of both general and specific cultural and social orders (1981C:129).

This is an important point. To move from general levels of practice to specific ones is more than a question of linguistic differentiation, that is, categorical distinction. The relations must be probed at the sites of production, that is, the level where the cultural form is produced.

## Gloss 5

In drawing on Lukacs's pioneering work, Williams posits both the general and the specific levels of cultural practice. He takes a stand, in characteristic fashion, against the reduction of aesthetic practices against maintaining rigid categories; against the abstraction of aesthetic categorization; and against undue generalizations. The concept of "solution" -- in the sense of some "liquid solution" -- is what Williams puts forth in his last chapter on "Organization" (1981C, Ch. 8) to capture metaphorically both general and specific practices. The concept of "solution", suggests various images of "immersion", "dissolution", "precipitates" which can be used to picture the numerous "states" in which aesthetic practices are realized. Some of the problems of this conceptualization were pointed out in the critique of the previous chapter. Williams is faulted for conflating epistemological levels of practice. This is not a problem when he considers the more narrow sphere of the sociology of culture as the production and reproduction of the art form. The problem of the conflation of epistemological levels arises if culture is taken to include other dimensions than production, such as, the social relations of "lived relations" (i.e. male-female; Black-White, etc.).

Arts, Social Form: The Signals of Art. Williams moves next in his analyses from the "social processes

of 'art'" to the "arts as social forms". In this area of the "arts as social forms", Williams brings into counterpoint both historical and structural dimensions of the "signals of art". In so doing he comprehends both diachronic and synchronic dimensions. It is a most original step which breaks down the rigid boundaries and seeming conflict of both the historical and structuralist perspectives. Williams suggests that a,

...vast and ordinarily unnoticed area of the history of arts is the development of systems of social signals that what is now to be made available is to be regarded as art (1981C: 130).

Of the wide range of signals that of "occasion" and "place" has gained wide acceptance: "This signal is so established and conventional that it hardly has to be noticed" (1981C:131). For example, the art gallery as signal gives credence to art works in a way that a street display does not. Further, for dramatic performance there is a number of elements which together constitute a signal system. In the theatre -- the stage, curtains, seating, lighting -- all signal the kind of performance to be expected. In television, the identification of drama has a number of framing conventions, so too, for radio-drama.

Williams brings up the possibilities for confusion of signals. He reminds us of,

... the famous case of the radio dramatization of Well's "War of the Worlds", which, within a confusion of signals such as use of the convention of radio news reports, was quite widely received as an 'actuality' account of an alien invasion (1981C:133).

The panic created attests to the underlying functioning of signals.

From an historical perspective, the sociology of signal systems is complex. In the example of English medieval popular drama, the festival of Corpus Christi, brings out some of the complexities. The festival was held not in theatre or church, but in the streets. Costumes, effects and setting of scene signalled the drama. There was common use of "prologue": "A preliminary direct address, to indicate both the subject and the fact of performance" (1981C:134). The "prologue" or "epilogue", in Williams's view, in the medieval drama is a borderline signal:

It is on the borderline between a true signal indicating the nature of the coming activity and establishing specific relations within which it is intended to occur, and that type of signal which is not preparatory or externally indicative but is integrated within the form of a work... (1981C:134).

In classical Greek drama, the mixture of drama and religious event was present.

The performances were part of a religious festival, the City of Dionysia, in the theatre of Dionysus. Each day's performances began with a sacrifice and libations; the priest of

Dionysus sat in the centre front of the audience: the image of the god, normally kept in the temple adjacent to the theatre, had been carried in procession and placed in the theatre; in the centre of the orchestra was an altar (1981C:135, 136).

All these elements clearly signal the organization of a religious festival. On the other hand, there were clear dramatic signals.

The figures were not priests and worshippers, but actors and chorus in front of an audience. The reiterated formalities of ritual had been replaced by the specific and (even on the same themes) consciously variable compositions of words and actions by individual dramatists. The performed plays, and the acting, were in conscious competition for prizes (1981C:136).

This example illustrates the complexity of "reading" signals. It is easy to make the mistake of interpreting the past not in relation to its specific social and cultural order, but in relation to present understandings.

It is also a mistake, in Williams's view, to restrict the sociology of signal systems to external signals such as occasion, place, modes of assembly or formal institution. As Williams suggests,

... it is also a crucial fact in the development of art that some kinds of signal become internalized, or are indeed quite internally developed, within art forms (1981C:137).

The example of "soliloquy" in drama illustrates the development of an internal signal system in relation to

the general and external signal system.

Williams underscores the limits of both formalist and structuralist analysis with reference to the example of soliloquy. As a formal element in drama, the soliloquy is defined "as a man speaking aloud to himself" (1981C:140). This definition is rather simplistic and reductive. Williams examines soliloquy in various dramatic texts and finds a number of variations. In addition to "man speaking to himself", soliloquy has been used "for the expression of inner conflict" and "for the expression of certain ultimate conflicts" (1981C:140).

A formalist analysis would focus on soliloquy as a formal element in composition, in terms of a device. A formalist problematic questions the reduction of form to other practices that are psychological, sociological or historical in orientation. This remains valid. The problem is that formalist analyses move too far in the opposite direction. Formal elements appear as if they developed and existed autonomously. Subsequent variations, such as those Williams draws out, cannot be accounted for.

A structuralist analysis tends to examine the formal elements as well. In this perspective, formal elements are viewed as variations of a total structure; the structure determining the formal elements. What matters is the internal history. Autonomy of structure is assumed. Here, too, the structures function

independently, from either social history or practice. All is system or relations.

In Genetic Structuralism, the perspective developed by Lucien Goldmann (1975), both the evolution of forms and the structuration and deconstruction of forms are posited. This is a move away from the notion of autonomous emergence of forms to relative autonomy. It is a position that challenges both historical and structural ones and is less determining than "pure" structuralism. Williams's main critique of Goldmann's genetic-structuralist formulations is that homologous relations are posited only for some forms; those that are of genius quality. Only some social relations are significant. In Goldmann's problematic, by implication, works that are of lesser importance, are excluded. Williams acknowledges the complexity of the problems but insists that, "... any form of a priori exclusion of knowable areas of culture is as unacceptable as the more evidently arbitrary exclusion of 'history' or other 'peripheral' concerns" (1981C:144). Williams upholds the view that the sociology of culture must remain open, "in principle and practice", to all kinds of cultural forms. His intention is to fill the theoretical gap which, in his opinion, lies in explicating the conditions of a practice, "... for it is in these conditions that a specificity can be affirmed, and yet the inevitable relations between different practices explored"

(1981C:145).

Arts, Social Forms: Dramatic Forms, Movements.

Williams points out a theoretical gap in formalist, structuralist, and genetic-structuralist approaches to cultural practices or cultural form. Generally these approaches do not provide an adequate account of the conditions of a practice. This implies identifying social, political and economic conditions underlying cultural practices or forms.

In historical perspective Williams examines a variety of dramatic forms. He looks at Greek tragedy; the development of opera and neo-classical drama; English Renaissance drama; Restoration forms; Heroic drama; the Comedy of Manners and Bourgeois Drama. He deliberates on the development of Naturalism and the changes to new forms such as Symbolic Abstraction, Subjective Expressionism and finally Social Expressionism.

In the case of Greek tragedy, Williams's main premise is "that certain forms of social relationship are deeply embodied in certain forms of art" (1981C:149). The dramatic performance in Greek tragedy was incorporated within a religious festival (1981C:139). Despite the complexity there were clear dramatic signals and clear religious signals. Two formal elements of Greek Tragedy are the choric hymn (the dithyramb), a pre-dramatic form, and acted dialogue. The variations of acted dialogue virtually



constituted a new general form.

In its mature form, this new 'drama' then consisted of a chorus, with a chorus leader who was one form of the originally emergent single figure; a protagonist (first actor) who was the more developed form of this same figure; two other (and no more) actors; and attendant mutes (1981C:149).

The chorus not only sang and danced as it did in taking part in the dithyramb or choric hymn, but related to the actors. The chorus leader both sang and spoke in a transitional mode that ranges between chorus song and spoken dialogue. The range was varied "from simple indications to a form of dialogue in itself" (1981C:149). The three actors, taking on all the speaking parts (generally seven or eight characters) spoke in formal metres and wore masks. A key innovation in this new form is the interaction of actor and chorus. At one or more moments of climax the actors sang out interacting with the chorus. In Williams's view,

"This is an outstanding case of a highly conditioned specific form, of a deep kind, which became, as it were, a quite general cultural property, in the end belonging to the sociology of our species, at a certain level of cultural development, than to the specific sociology of a given society at a certain place and time" (1981C:150).

Notwithstanding the cultural transmission of this form to other times and places, the social conditions underlying this new development in Greek Tragedy are

significant. Williams asserts:

The moment of such emergence is then sociologically precise. It was the interaction, and only in that respect the transformation, of a received form (choral singing) with new formal elements, in their new emphasis, embodied different social relations (1981C:151).

There are a number of homologies to be noted. The shift from a dominant mode of societal collectivity to individuation corresponds to the choral song -- characteristically a collective mode -- and the shift to the incorporation of individual actors. Full individuality in the society was not yet realized. A single actor still did not play the part of a single character. The single actor in relation to the chorus complements the relations of priest to body of worshippers. Williams's main point is this:

What we actually find, in the form as a whole, and taking account of its many variations and internal developments, is this culturally specific articulation of dynamic relations between the unique and the common, the singular and the collective, and this articulation intersects with other forms of discourse and with the practical history of a society, under major transitional pressures (1981C:152).

The social relations that pertain in a particular society at a particular time, the particular forms of discourse, are the ground in which cultural forms are embedded and from which they emerge.

In the case of Bourgeois Drama, Williams notes

that,

By the mid-eighteenth century, if still in early and relatively crude ways, the determining factors of almost all modern dramatic forms had in fact made their appearance (1981C:166).

Williams brings to our attention five factors which, taken together, have provided the basis for the distinctive deep signals and conventions of modern drama. These factors are the notions of (1) "contemporary"; (2) "indigenous"; (3) "quasi-colloquial"; (4) "social extension of inclusiveness"; and (5) a "new secularism". The notions of "contemporary" and "indigenous" refer to the expectation that such features as the time, place, milieu of dramatic action and dramatic performance would be congruous. In the forms, the Comedy of Manners and Bourgeois Drama, the contemporary and indigenous dramatic material stands in contrast to all previous forms. The change in the speech pattern to "quasi-colloquialism" is discernible in the Comedy of Manners. In the nineteenth century, this form of dramatic speech attains the full force of a norm. Both "a new social extension of inclusiveness" and "a new secularism" come largely out of Bourgeois Drama. The factor of "new social extension of inclusiveness" refers to the change evident in Bourgeois Drama: that the lives of everyday people are as much the stuff of drama as are the lives of gods and kings. The factor

of secularism puts the weight of human action on human shoulders, "...excluding from the dramatic action any supernatural intervention or agency" (1981C:167).

Naturalism is a prime case in point. What marks Naturalism as a movement continues to be the subject of debate. But from Williams's perspective the five factors identified above characterize modern drama as a whole. Particular to Naturalism is the inclusion of secularism, along with a variety of combinations of the other four factors. Pointing out the underlying conditions, Williams writes,

At the deepest level this new sense of the material environment, this physical grasp of a man-made world, is profoundly characteristic of the bourgeois and especially the capitalist social order. The altered relations which found their fullest expression in the new urban industrial economy, were represented in drama in these new conventions (1981C:169).

The stage as signal indicating space, place, location now signalled the room: "... the room soaking into the lives of the persons as their lives had soaked into it" (1981C:169). The contradictions between the private and public spheres of life in the industrialized order were not only represented in drama, but Ibsen, Zola, Strindberg, Chekhov and O'Neill, probed and questioned the way of life. As Williams underscores:

... the site of decisive action, understandably no longer the palace, was the private family room: a room, however, that was predominantly shown as a trap: the centre of

significant immediate relationships, but with larger determining forces operating beyond it, to be looked at from the window or to arrive as messages which would reshape these lives (1981Q:170,171).

From the first dramas in the modern period and the naturalist movement there has been a proliferation of drama and forms. Williams distinguishes three new forms,

"each increasingly sustained by a distinctive ideology, which can be seen (of course with some confusion and overlapping) as corresponding to three discernible formations within the crises of late bourgeois society" (1981C:172).

These are identified ("as preliminary working distinctions", 1981C:172) as: (1) subjective expressionism; (2) social expressionism; and (3) symbolic abstractionism. Both subjective and social expressionism are breaks beyond naturalism; whereas symbolic abstractionism looks back, so to speak, to earlier forms where religion and myth were dominant.

Typical of "subjective expressionism" is Strindberg, the late Beckett and the late Chekhov. The form purges both the material environment and the web of social relations to leave the individual alone with his projected world. Often the individual is depicted in an advanced stage of alienation, a fragmented individual who hardly recognizes his own projections. The form shares with "symbolic abstractionism" a focus

on the unconscious. Williams writes: "The main and highly original impulse of subjective expressionism was the dramatization of isolation and exposure: the cry of the lost individual in a meaningless world" (1981C:174). In the later stages of this form, the pain of the individual is transformed to pleasure: "the tragic and agonized spirit of the early experiments has become predominantly comic and even consciously entertaining" (1981C:176); a situation of high absurdity that requires full sociological examination.

In an opposite direction is the movement of "social expressionism", represented by the work of Toller and Kaiser in the 1920's and Brecht's epic theatre. Williams points out that "social expressionism typically projected and polarized the contending social forces..." (1981C:178). Consciously, the form was directed to a new class audience. Nevertheless it continued within the general conditions of bourgeois society.

Symbolic abstraction "sought to cancel not only the naturalist but the most general bourgeois emphasis" (Williams, 1981C:172,173). The plays of T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats typify this form. Symbolic abstraction was a reaction against both the commercialism and materialism of bourgeois society. It tapped the metaphysical dimensions by bringing back dramatic elements used in early periods: religious elements, myth, legend, mask and chorus; etc. The form was

directed to mysterious, inexplicable forces. In effect it represented

the attempted stabilization, at a new level of abstraction from society and from history, of the mystery of general human processes: a mystery now finally located - for this is its bourgeois character, as distinct from earlier metaphysical forms - within the 'individual' (1981C:174).

#### Gloss 6

In the foregoing Williams touches on the link between formal elements of drama and underlying societal conditions and the continuous process of structuration and destructuration of forms. Methodologically, Williams makes the case for the analyses of both historical and formal dimensions without the reduction of either. Of particular importance, his explication reveals a correspondence between the structure of the dramatic form (e.g. soliloquy) and the structure of social relations in particular societies at particular times. He lays the basis for the analysis of the signifying dimensions of the dramatic form.

#### V. Reproduction

Williams probes the question of reproduction, a central dimension of his cultural materialist theory. Important among his considerations are: (1) the problem of making generalizations: moving theoretically from

practice or from the cultural form to the processes of critical thinking. (2) He opens up questions on the meanings of reproduction in characteristic fashion by pointing out received assumptions. (3) He puts forth the highly original formulation of "variable distances of practices": the autonomy or determination ("economic in the last instance") of cultural forms, practices, institutions which constitute the external relations of form to social formation. (4) He explores internal reproductions and suggests the continued need to articulate and specify levels of reproducibility within forms. Taking drama as the example there is variance of reproducibility at the level of dramatic mode or genre (e.g. comedy, tragedy, romance, epic, etc.), and type (e.g. classical, Greek, English Renaissance, Bourgeois, Naturalist, etc.). (5) He moves away from the limitations of correspondence theories (i.e. homologous relations) by putting forth concepts of archaic, residual, dominant and emergent forms and practices to depict social and cultural change.

(1) On Generalizations. Williams points to two main reasons for the difficulties in moving from analysis of specific forms, practices, and institutions to generalizations. One reason pertains to issues of specificity and complexity, and one to the kinds of generalizations that have been made.

On the question of specificity, it is reasonable to be dissatisfied with any general analysis. The



moment there is movement away from the actual form, practice or institution, there is a different practice. Williams suggests, "This dissatisfaction is healthy when it leads to grounded objections, reasoned amendments and, above all, further detailed investigation" (1981C:181).

There is another kind of dissatisfaction with general analysis which is defensive and goes "... against recognition of the necessarily general relations within which all cultural work, including analysis, is done" (1981C:181). This kind of dissatisfaction is linked to sustaining vested interests, not necessarily in income or life style, "but rather a condition of relatively distanced, relatively unchallenged relations with the practical and continuing social process" (1981C:182). The example of those adhering to dominant paradigms in any field, literary or scientific, comes readily to mind.

On the question of types of generalizations, two main problems are common: first, if there is the movement from the specific form, practice, or institution towards an historical generalization, there is the danger of assuming universal application. Secondly, if the concepts needed for analysis are drawn from a particular philosophic or sociological base, this base, in Williams's phrasing, "can so easily come to direct all stages of inquiry, or, as has happened recently, in general cultural theory, to absorb

research into their own forms" (1981C:183). Prefatory then to the analysis of cultural reproduction is this cautionary note on the complexity of the movement from the specific to the general and the problems inherent in generalized frameworks -- either historical, philosophical or sociological -- and the trajectory they then lead. In summation Williams asserts: "...it is inherent in the concept of a culture that it is capable of being reproduced; and, further, that in many of its features culture is indeed a mode of reproduction" (1981C:184). Such dimensions of culture as form, signals and conventions, language and tradition have the capacity for reproduction.

(2) Defining "Reproduction". The word reproduction, like so many of our words, is complex and laden with multidimensional meanings. In the 19th century, reproduction meant "exact copy". It is "exact copy" that is reproduced in forms of writing or in paintings. It is also "exact copy" that is reproduced by mechanical or electronic processes. Another meaning is the reproduction of the species. In human biology natural reproduction brings into being a new organism, not an "exact copy". The meanings which are implicated in cultural processes go beyond "exact copy" or biologic meanings. Meanings need to be assessed rather than asserted.

Williams refines the meanings of reproducibility of cultural form. A more correct sense is the notion

of "replication or alternatively propagation or multiplying" (1981C:197). He writes,

Some term like 'replication' is then necessary, since the body of such work, especially in modern market conditions (where it interlocks in its essential predictability and repeatability with economic organization of large-scale distribution) is very large indeed (1981C:197).

He points further to another error in reproducibility:

"We must indeed refuse", Williams insists, "the common distinction between 'mass-produced art' ... and 'original, authentic art'" (1981C:198). In some cases "... a 're-production' of the form [is]: a fuller or newly directed realization of its possibilities" (1981C:198). It is a production.

(3) External Relations: "Variable Distances of Practice". Williams tackles the complex and long-standing polemic of cultural production and reproduction: the problem of determination and autonomy. At one pole of the argument are those who insist on the autonomy of art, the "art of the art's sake" proponents; at the other pole, others insist on the economic determination of cultural production and reproduction. A mediating view-point is offered by Williams when he writes,

This is clearly a very important argument, but it has been confused by being handled in much too general terms. For it is clear that there are certain kinds of cultural production which are directly economically determined, and it is clear also that there

are other kinds which, to say the least, are so indirectly determined, and perhaps in this sense not determined at all, that to approach them in such a way is to misunderstand, reduce and even cancel them. To offer a general theory based on one set of such instances is then as unwise as it is unnecessary (1981C:191).

Williams offers a hypothesis of relative distances rather than a general theory. Empirically this hypothesis,

... can be brought to bear, in any particular case, not only descriptively but now analytically, through the hypothesis of variable autonomy, and thus variable reproduction, according to the degrees of distance between the conditions of a practice and otherwise organized social relations (emphasis this author, 1981C:193).

In the example of broadcast media or newspapers the production and reproduction of programming or news, there are "certain fundamental kinds of determination" (1981C:192). The links of the broadcast medium to economic, political or cultural interests are often manifest:

... whether (as often) (i) directly economic, or (as again often) (ii) political, in the congruence between the forms of privileged ownership and the general forms of the socio-political order, or more generally (iii) cultural, in an administered compatibility between the actual production and the dominant interests of the social order as seen from just these conditions ... (1981C:192).

In the example of some art forms, -- i.e., the practice of poetry, sculpture, music, -- the distance from

economic, political, or ideological forces may be so great, that the practice is or practices are relatively autonomous. At a manifest level, the notions of variable autonomy, and variable reproduction are a giant step away from conceptualizations of reproduction which gloss over the wide range of differences in cultural practices, forms or institutions. The hypothesis of variable autonomy does not solve the whole question of reproduction of cultural form. But, as Williams points out,

... there are still major problems in the whole question of reproduction 'within' cultural forms. It is indeed here that the very notion of reproduction, and the related idea of determination, seems at times to break in our hands (1981C:193).

(4) Internal Relations: Levels of Form: Mode, Genre, Type. The term form is one that is used often without discrimination or precision with the result that "... discussion of forms is radically diminished and confused" (1981C:193). The need is to specify levels of form and by so doing assess relevant social relations. Williams begins with some preliminary assessments. He distinguishes two major levels: "modes" and "genres". Drama if taken as "mode" was developed within particular societies at particular times. As "mode", drama has been reproduced within a number of different social orders

...with highly developed and complex internal signals, which are normally capable of instituting the effective relations within which the form can be shared, they are very general, and their reproduction is at least relatively autonomous (1981C:194).

The reproduction of the "dramatic mode" appears less subject to variations within different social orders and different times. At the level of "genre" the persistence of tragedy, comedy, epic and romance is somewhat less than at the level of "dramatic mode". There appears to be a recurring cyclic movement of genres which relate to various social orders. Williams cites the example of epic and romance which did not survive "into the bourgeois epoch, at least without radical redefinition..." (1981C:195). It is on the level of "types" that Williams finds evidence of significant change vis-a-vis social change. The "types" of drama -- Greek tragedy, English Renaissance, Bourgeois,

...can be defined as radical distributions, re-distributions and innovations of interest, corresponding to the specific and changed social character of an epoch (1981C:196).

Williams's notations on forms, modes, genres, and types are suggestive of directions to be followed. To gain an understanding of the wide range of reproduction, the distinction of levels of form, modes, genres, types is a primary task. "We have then always to be prepared to speak of production and

reproduction", Williams expresses, "rather than of reproduction alone" (1981C:201).

5. Cultural Change: "Archaic, Residual, Dominant, Emergent". Not only is it necessary to specify various levels of internal to cultural forms, practices, institutions, but also in relation to external social and cultural changes. Conceptually Williams identifies archaic, residual, dominant and emergent levels of cultural production and reproduction as these relate to particular societies. Here a clear notion of dominant is essential. Usually there is a one-to-one correspondence between those in dominant positions and the sets of ideas, values, beliefs, as well as cultural objectivations that support this dominant class. The residual refers to "work made in earlier and often different times, yet still available and significant" and emergent, to "work of various new kinds" (1981C:204). The concepts -- residual, dominant, emergent -- provide for analysis of a wide range of practices rather than simply limit the analysis to homologous relations. Tensions, innovations, contradictions can be taken into account, despite the complexities of such conceptualizations.

#### Gloss 7

Williams's deliberations on reproduction are among his most innovative and important. In summary, three main dimensions of reproduction are considered: the

meanings of reproduction, the internal kinds of reproduction of dramatic art and reproduction with respect to social and cultural change.

First, respect to the polysemic character of the concept of culture, Williams's advice is that it is useful to keep open which meaning is applicable in a given situation. In general terms, two hypotheses are forwarded: one, that, it is inherent in the concept of culture that it is capable of being reproduced; and one, that, in many of its features, culture is a mode of reproduction (1981C:181).

He provides the construct "variable distances of practices" to indicate that, in the whole range of social practice, there are variable measures of distance between particular practices and the social relations which organize them (1981C:189). He acknowledges that "at its most determinate level" (1981C:189), there is an identity of cultural reproduction and economic reproduction. This is an admission of the Althusserian stance, that in the last instance there is a determination by the economy. Williams's contribution is to assert the wide range of practices and the need to establish the actual and variable degrees of distance in contradistinction to strict economic determinism.

Second, the complexities of the idea of reproduction are no more apparent than with respect to internal reproduction, that is, reproduction within



cultural forms. Williams points to the need to distinguish different levels of an art form and the varying social relations relevant to each. What is needed are working distinctions of levels -- modes, genres, types -- as well as the matter of form itself to "attain" a more precise understanding of the varieties of reproduction" (1981C:196).

Third, Williams provides a framework for identifying cultural change in relation to social change. The constructs -- archaic, residual, dominant and emergent -- distinguish "four situations for which innovation can be socially related" (1981C:201). The received idea of reproduction as static and unidimensional is no longer possible to sustain in view of Williams's analyses. He opens up a wide range of theoretical and empirical options to pursue within the framework of the production and reproduction of art.

#### VI. Social Organization of Culture

The social organization of culture comprehends the various areas or levels: cultural institutions, cultural formations, means of cultural production, processes of cultural reproduction, culturally developed arts and artistic forms. Each area or level is distinct but connected. To bring these complex variational areas into active relations, Williams proposes the general definition of culture as a "realized and related signifying systems" applied

historically (1981C:213). As a construct, the defining tool -- "culture as a realized and related signifying system" -- is a move away from the organic generality of the definition of culture as a "whole way of life". The change in the defining terms of culture is indicative of Williams's dissatisfaction with the totalizing implication of culture as "a whole way of life". It is his realization that such a definition is often in practice weak, "since its insistence on interrelations can be made passive, or altogether evaded, by its simultaneous possibilities of too wide a generality and too narrow a specialization" (1981C:207). The defining construct of "culture as signifying system" is a mediating one. In Williams's terms:

... we can distinguish a signifying system from, on the one hand, other kinds of systematic social organization, and on the other hand, more specific signal systems and systems of signs. This distinction is not made to separate and disjoin these areas, but to make room for analysis of their interrelations. Thus it is always necessary to be able to distinguish economic systems, political systems and generational (kinship and family) systems, and to be able to discuss these in their own terms. But when we come, as we must, to interrelate these, we find not only that each has its own signifying system - for they are always relations between conscious and communicating human beings - but that these are necessarily elements of a wider and more general signifying system: indeed a social system (1981C:207).

Williams places "the sociology of signal systems" at

the center of his problematic. He traces the history of drama and the signals used. By so doing he reveals the connections of elements of the form of the drama and those of the social organization. Williams captures the semiotic analysis from its reduction trajectory and autonomy by interpreting the signals of drama within the wider signal system of the social order. In the historical sweep Williams touches on the linkages between the formal elements of drama and the underlying societal conditions. It is by following the process of structuration and destructuration of the forms -- by following the dramatic form from ancient Greeks to English Renaissance to modern movements -- that Williams finds relations between the formal elements in drama and social relations. Methodologically, Williams makes the case for the analyses of both historical and formal dimensions without the reduction of either.

Williams looks at structuralist analyses in the light of historical practices. Variations of formal elements in drama, for example, are understood not simply as integral and systemic but in tandem with transformations in the form and in the society. Williams opens up the rather dogmatic, reductionist, absolutist end-point of structuralist thought: that "all is system or relations". He offers a corrective to structuralism by emphasizing the evolution of forms: the structuration and destructuration of forms. He

comes close to Goldmann's problematic in this respect. He takes issue with Goldmann on such key concepts as homologous relations and "genius" quality. It is possible, Williams concedes, that some works are more important than others. But Williams's stance is to maintain a sociology of culture that is open.

By way of his historical method Williams brings together diachronic and synchronic analysis. Williams identifies the area of the sociology of 'intellectuals' as an important one to be pursued. Aside from the lack of research in this area, its importance is central given the humanist dimension of Williams's problematic. In each area in the field of the sociology of culture Williams puts the "human co-efficient" at the center. It is the social relations of institutions and formations that is the focus; the social means of production and reproduction; the social aspects of the art form and the social organizations as it is related to the signifying practices which are at base social. At the core of Williams's theory is the human: relating, acting, interacting, creating, thinking and developing.

Gloss

Williams leads the way in mapping the sociology of culture, but many unresolved problems remain. He stresses the need to examine the conditions of a practice. This is true, but here too there remains much theoretical work to be accomplished. Just what are the

conditions of a practice? Are they the underlying aspects of cultural creation? Which aspects are relevant? Which are limiting or controlling? What exactly do we mean by practice? Is it a work or works? Is it a practice or a process? Still, where is the art? The methodological and theoretical chasm appears.

On reproduction, Williams moves the analysis forward by questioning the level of generality of abstraction and by probing the meanings historically that are taken for granted and are reified. His formulations of "variable distances of practice" is an important heuristic construct. It can be used to mediate between various levels of practice external to the form. Though somewhat general still, it can be useful to assess the autonomy of determination of cultural forms and external social formation in terms of degrees. It moves from either-or considerations to a more flexible and realistic examination.

Williams's examination of internal form is also at a most general level and at an initial stage. Methodologically however, he leaves a wide gap. His work could be augmented by considering the work of others on the analysis of the internal dimensions of form. There is a plethora of strategies towards analysis of text (see Harari, 1979). On the other hand, Williams's identification of the archaic, residual, dominant and emergent categories moves far ahead of reflection theories or correspondence

theories. These categories allow for the depiction of multi-dimensional currents of thought in situations that are in the process of transformation.

To recapitulate, with Williams's general definition of "cultural production and reproduction as realized and related signifying systems" he moves from the totalizing definition of culture "as a whole way of life" to a mediated materialist definition. "Realized and related signifying systems" permeate and mediate throughout the various dimensions of social organizations. The term "realized" denotes real, actual practices; while the term "related" refers to the vital connection among the various types of practices or organizations within the greater whole. Materialist underpinnings, indicated by the terms "cultural production and reproduction", are continuous processes in flux. Signifying systems or the general study of sign-systems is at the center of the general definition, no longer turning inwardly solely to text but now also outwardly to social connections: "a deliberately extended social dimension" (1981C:31).

Williams's problematic demonstrates the possibility of connecting historicist tendencies with structuralist ones. Though necessary and timely, by introducing semiotics into his problematic, Williams virtually opens up Pandora's box. Not only is the field, the sociology of culture in an initial stage, but so too is the general study of sign-systems (see

Eco, 1979). The metaphor of "solution" that Williams proffers is certainly a graphic one, but can serve only in a limited and in an orienting fashion and not in all-inclusive or a definitive one. Williams points to the sociology of "intellectuals" as an important but neglected area to be pursued. Here is a demand for a "theory of the subject", as Giddens has phrased it (1982). In Giddens's theory of structuration, he argues, "...that neither subject (human agent) nor object ('society', or social institutions) should be regarded as having primacy. Each is 'constituted in and through recurrent practices'" (1982:8). In Williams's terms, the ideas, concepts or expressing ideas are constituted, that is, produced and reproduced: "... at times directly as ideas and concepts, but also more widely in the form of shaping institutions, signified social relations, religious and cultural occasions, modes of work, and performance: indeed in the whole signifying system and in the system it signifies (1981C:216).

The limits identified and the potential of Williams's problematic are best demonstrated by way of reference to a practice. In the following is a model of analysis schematized from Williams's theoretical formulations. The practice referred to, as I have already indicated, is the set of sound dramas produced by the CBC.

## NOTES

1. For the centrality of this work in Williams's thought see Hall, 1982; Silverstone, 1984.
2. I use the term "gloss" following Bourdieu (1977). It is intended to separate the synopsis or review from the commentary or gloss with which I augment Williams's text. The purpose of keeping Williams's formulations distinct, or as distinct as possible from my own interpretative process, is to allow the reader to see how the model is derived.



## Chapter 8

### A Model of Cultural Production and Reproduction as a Realized and Relating Signifying System

Keeping within Williams's problematic, and the necessary limits imposed by the underdeveloped state of the sociology of culture, the following is a demonstration of both the potential and the problems inherent in Williams's theorizing on culture "as a realized and related signifying system". It is in the same spirit as that Culture (1981C), as an "inquiry and a set of working hypotheses", that a "hypothetical model of description"<sup>1</sup> is extrapolated.

As I have indicated at the outset, substantively, I have in mind the case of English-language sound drama produced by the C.B.C. To review, radio drama is of interest from literary, dramatic and sociological points of view. From a literary and dramatic perspective, CBC English language radio drama constitutes Canada's first national theatre, albeit on the air. The drama broadcasts were a training ground for Canadian writers, actors, technicians, musicians, directors and producers. Many of those involved in radio began their careers in local live theatre groups across Canada. Many continued to work in live theatre, in radio, and subsequently, in television drama. The broadcasts provided an opportunity for indigenous material to be widely disseminated. Not only were

these sound dramas sources of entertainment, but also, they were sources of values, opinions and ideas.

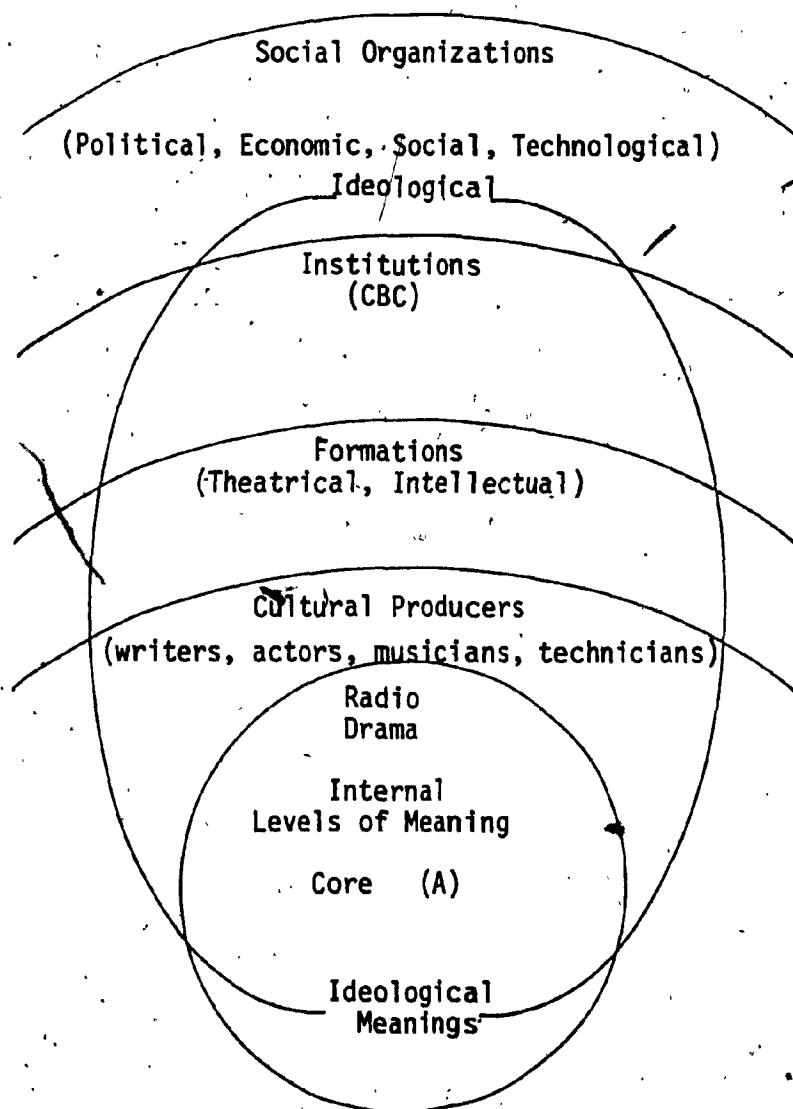
From a sociological perspective, these values, opinions and ideas are part of the ideological realm. It is the complex relations of the ideological, social, economic and political practices that are of particular sociological significance. On the one hand, there are the relations of the Cultural Producers -- the writers, actors, musicians, technicians, directors -- and their "expressing ideas, values and opinions", and on the other hand, the ideas, values and opinions extant in Canadian society.<sup>2</sup> Then, there are the relations of the Cultural Producers -- the writers, actors, musicians, technicians, directors, producers -- and the CBC as an agency of the state. The radio dramas as media products, or as cultural practices of the CBC, are tied to technological developments, social and political interests and economic forces and means. It is towards the articulation of this mesh of relations that this model is intended.

To begin, Figure 1 represents an overview of the "Model of Culture as a Realized and Related Signifying System". At the bottom of the figure is the circle, or sphere, indicating the cultural form, radio drama. The figure depicts the relations of the cultural form -- radio drama -- both its external and internal relations as a dialectical whole. The relations external to radio drama include the englobing spheres of: Cultural

Figure 1

Model of Culture as a  
Realized and Related  
Signifying System

External  
Levels of Practice



Producers (writers, actors, musicians, technicians and directors); Formations (theatrical, intellectual etc.); Institutions (i.e., CBC) and levels (i.e., political, economic, social, technological and ideological) comprising the Social Organization<sup>3</sup>. There could be, of course, other levels or dimensions, such as generational and familial ones. The ideological meanings of the radio drama are highlighted in the Figure I and the lines are intended to indicate the links to ideological levels of practice within the social organization. This exemplifies just one of the links of a vast possible array.

The relations internal to the radio drama, that is, an analysis of levels of meaning of the art itself is depicted in Figure 5 and will be elaborated after the explication of the external relations which follows now.

#### External Relations

Radio drama is both part of broadcast technology and a literary and dramatic genre. Because of the dynamic and cyclic nature of the model, the analysis can begin at any level of practice. For explanatory purposes, one could begin at the most general level, the social organization, and proceed to articulate the relations of a particular socio-political economy, the

technological developments and the ideological levels of practice. The analysis could be directed to the relations between the technological development of radio, for example, and ideology in the sense of the general process of the production of meanings and ideas. The model, as a whole, would attempt to explicate how the ideology of a particular radio drama is embedded within general ideological-hegemonic practices. We will return to the ideological-hegemonic dimensions at the end of the chapter.

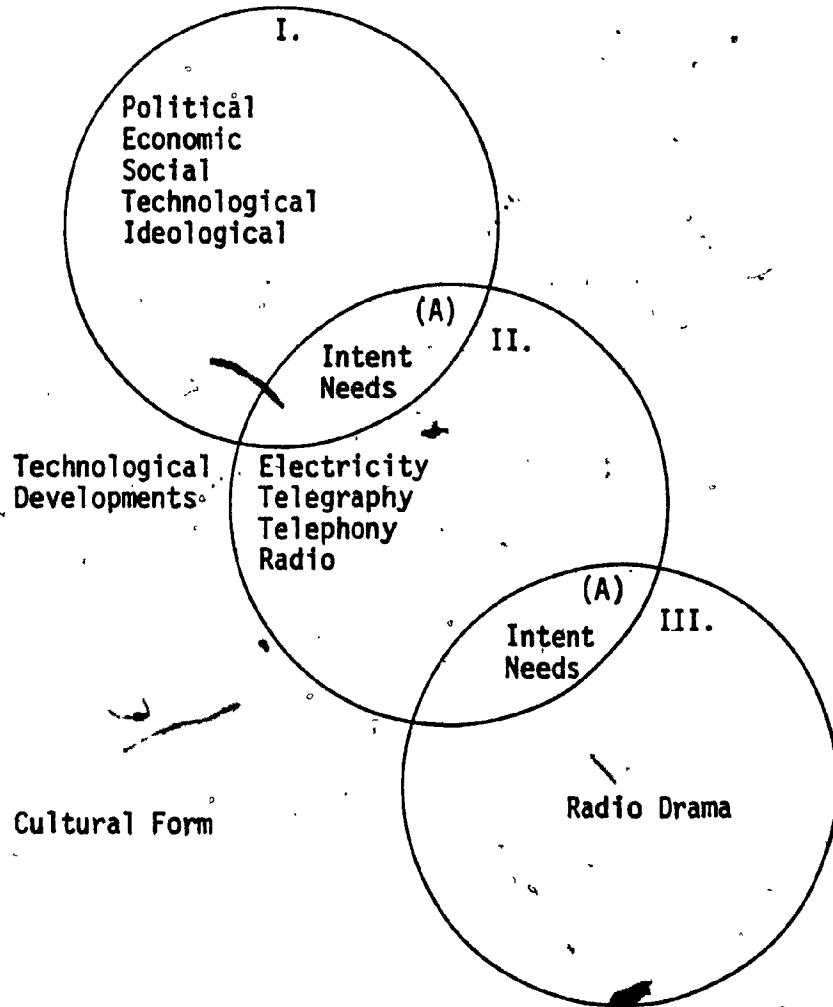
#### Society, Technology and Cultural Form

As I have indicated, the analysis of radio drama implicates a set of relations between technology, society and culture, in this case, a cultural form. Figure 2, "Society, Technology and Cultural Form", presents another view of the set of relations. Three overlapping circles or spheres represent: I. the Social Organization; II. Technological Developments; and III. the Cultural Form, ie. Radio Drama. The development of radio broadcasting under the aegis of an institution of the state, such as the CBC, brings together a web of social, political, cultural, economic and technological practices. Williams puts forth a number of general propositions which implicate these relations. These are: (1) that technology develops within society; (Sphere I. represents society as Social Organization comprising levels of economic, political,

Figure 2

## Society, Technology and Cultural Form

Social Organization



technological, social and ideological levels among others; (2) that technology develops with social intent and according to particular needs; (see (a) in Figure 2); (3) that technological developments (depicted in Sphere II) in telegraphy, telephony and radio are secondary outcomes within the primary communications needs of a military and commercial system; (4) that technology as it develops then has a recurring impact, seemingly deterministic and, (5) that the development of a cultural form (Sphere III) -- techniques and content -- is a tertiary one, also arising out of intent or need. The first step in the process could be the examination of the empirical situation in the light of these propositions. In all the proposals it is the emphasis on social intent, need and practice that is paramount.

#### Institutions

Williams helps to focus "the question of effective social relations of culture" and attention on the institutional level (1981C:35). He posits an initial distinction, that of

- (1) variable relations between 'cultural producers' and recognizable social institutions, and
- (2) variable relations in which 'cultural producers' have been organized or have organized themselves and their formations.

The inventory that Williams provides serves to identify the relations -- essentially of class and power --

which pertain. Figure 3 sets out the key relations in market and post-market institutions.

Figure 3

Institutions: Inventory of Social Relations

Market Institutions

- (1) artisanal
- (2) post-artisanal
- (3) market professional
- (4) corporate professional

Post-market Institutions

- (1) modern patronal
- (2) government
- (3) an intermediate body (i.e. B.B.C., C.B.C., Canada Council, etc).



In the case of radio drama, market relations continue to persist. We may find artists working in artisanal, post-artisanal, market professional and corporate professional relations. Any one of these institutional relations may be found to be operative within the organization of such a body as the CBC.

The degree of centralized control within an institution such as the CBC is a critical empirical question. To what extent does an agency of the state, such as the CBC -- with its national and protectionist mandate, its bureaucratic structure, its increasing rationalization, its funding from the public purse -- exercise its control, its hegemony? To what extent does the CBC serve the interests of its class, the ruling bloc (i.e. government functionaries, CBC executives, etc.)? What degree of autonomy does a department of the institution hold? The CBC Drama Department, for example, was set up for the express purpose of producing creative works. It is the relations between the institutional structures in its rational and bureaucratic form and its creative forms that require examination.

#### Formations

To follow Williams's guide further, he posits a wide range of formations that move the analysis from general institutions and their typical relations to forms of organization at a lower level of practice.

Formational analysis rests on a number of presuppositions that are given in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Formations: Presuppositions

- (1) no full account of a particular formations can be given without extending description and analysis into general history, where the whole social order and all its classes and formations can be properly taken into account, and ...
- (2) no full account of a formation can be given without attending to individual differences inside it,
- (3) typically, more modern kinds of formations occur at points of transition and intersection within a complex social history,
- (4) individuals who at once compose the formations and are composed by them have a further complex range of diverse positions, interests and influences,
- (5) some of which are resolved by the formations,
- (6) others of which remain as internal differences, as tensions, and often as the grounds for subsequent divergences, break-aways and further attempted formations (1981C:85,86).

For heuristic purposes the analysis could begin with (4) the individuals who compose the formations and are composed by them, in this case the Cultural Producers. A fully elaborated formational analysis is well beyond the scope of this work, but the direction will be indicated.

Cultural Producers

Critical at this level of analysis is the human factor. The Cultural Producer in both a generic sense and in a specific sense is the crucial mediator. Williams posits the role of Cultural Producer in generalized terms as the persons who actually create the cultural form. In the case of radio drama, this would include the production team: writers, actors, musicians, technicians, directors, and/or producer and any others. The actual producer and/or director is, in fact, the key person mediating between the cultural form and the various levels of practice. The new forms of cultural production in radio, as in cinema, and television, require group production, group coordination and a new division of labour. The responsibility for new forms of cultural production falls to Cultural Producers and often to the single producer. It is here that a formational analysis is appropriate.

Williams also posits the notion of symmetrical and asymmetrical relations. The kinds of asymmetrical relations require empirical inquiry. The kinds of control: i.e. licensing, censorship, the dictates of the market and forms of commercial control, the standardization of the cultural form and the increasing tendencies toward centralization of production and reproduction are all more complex than simple relations of domination and subordination. It is also the

cultural producer who is involved most directly with the cultural form itself. The cultural producer is the one responsible for the selection of which dramas are to be broadcast, the writers, actors and actresses, musicians and technicians to be hired and the quality of every aspect of the performance. In turning to the internal relations, attention is on the "expressing ideas", that is, on the ideas, meanings, values, opinions and attitudes that are generated and communicated by the Cultural Producers. This leads us to consider signifying systems and the internal levels of meaning which constitute the cultural form.

#### Internal Relations

By positing culture as "a related and realized signifying system", Williams points the way to semiotic and symbolic analyses of the cultural form. At the present, strategies abound in contemporary cultural critique. Harari advises that "theoretical ambiguity, methodological pluralism, diversity of approach and procedure, and heterogeneity" (1979:11) characterize most post-structuralist criticism. There are x-number of textual strategies.

#### Signals and Symbols of Radio Drama

We begin with Williams's proposition that, signifying systems are intrinsic to each of the other systems, yet are distinguishable as systems in

themselves. In the following two possible strategies are indicated. Figure 5 presents a diagram of the two strategies. It is the outer circle (1) that represents the manifest or surface linguistic level. It is at this level of meaning that the two strategies may coincide: the level of sign. In the following, both the semiotic strategy (Elam, 1980) and the symbolic (Frye, 1957) will begin to be elaborated.

#### Strategy One: A Semiotic Analysis; Sign and Code

Semiotics, the study of the production of meaning in society includes processes of both signification and communication (Fiske and Hartley, 1978). In reference to the cultural form drama: by definition

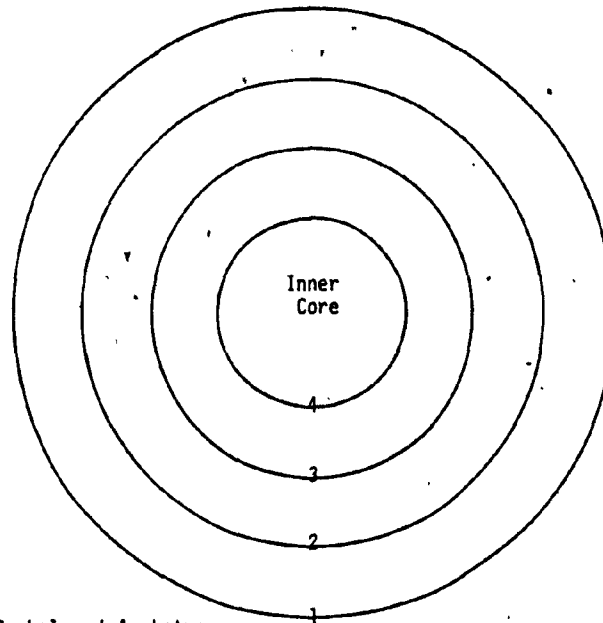
'Theatre' is taken to refer here to the complex of phenomena associated with the performer - audience transaction: that is, with the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it....  
[By] 'Drama' ... is meant that mode of fiction designed for stage presentation and constructed accordingly to particular ('dramatic') conventions (Elam, 1980:2).

Following this definition, we take the two practices as integrally related: the intertextuality of the performance and the dramatic. The work of art is the semiotic unit. The dramatic/performance text is a network of semiotic units belonging to different co-operative systems (Elam, 1980:7).

Semiotic analysis elaborates and relates sign;

**Radio Drama**

Systemic  
Linguistic  
Textual  
Ideological  
etc.



1 Literal and Descriptive Level  
Symbol as Motif or Sign

### 3 Mythic Level

Symbol as Archetype

#### 4 Anagogic Level

Symbol as Monad

Sources: Strategy 1 - Elam, 1900  
Strategy 2 - Frye, 1957

codes or systems into which signs are organized; and the "cultural" within which these signs and codes are operative. Much work has been published in the categorization of signs (icon, index, symbol), in the relations of sign (the arbitrary, iconic, motivation, constraint), and the role of convention (the organization of signs into paradigms and syntagms). There are at least two orders of signification: denotation and connotation. While denotation is a first order of signification; connotation is the second. There are principally three ways in which the second order of signification works: through simple connotation, symbol and myth. For an elaboration of symbol and myth we look to Frye's (1957) schema at a further point.

The principle of semiotization is a first principle in the semiotics of theatre and drama. The principle states that

the very fact of their appearance on stage suppresses the practical function of phenomenon in favour of a symbolic or signifying role, allowing them to participate in dramatic representation: 'while in real life the utilitarian function of an object is usually more important than its signification, on a theatrical set the signification is all important' (inset quote by Brusak, 1938:62, Elam, 1980C:8).

Emblematic of semiotization is the statement that: "all that is on stage is a sign" (Veltrusky, 1940:84, cited in Elam, 1980:7).

In the semiotics of drama and theatre, beyond basic denotation, "the theatrical sign inevitably acquires secondary meanings for the audience," relating it to the social, moral and ideological values operative in the community of which performers and spectators are part" (based on Bogatyrev 1938b in Elam, 1980:10). Elam puts the polysemic character of the theatrical sign directly when he writes,

Every aspect of the performance is governed by the denotation-connotation dialectic: the set, the actor's body, his movements and speech determine and are determined by a constantly shifting network of primary and secondary meanings. It is an essential feature of the semiotic economy of the theatrical performance that it employs a limited repertory of sign vehicles in order to generate a potentially unlimited range of cultural units and this extremely powerful generative capacity on the part of the theatrical sign vehicle is due in part to its connotative breadth (Elam, 1980:11).

He posits systemic, linguistic, intertextual, structural, presentational, epistemic, aesthetic, logical, ethical, behavioural, ideological, psychological and historical principles, which are involved in generating meaning. Each principle can be considered with respect to cultural codes as they interact with theatrical and dramatic subcodes. It is this repertory that could be drawn on in a preliminary analysis of the signals of radio drama.



Strategy Two: A Symbolic Analysis; Archetype and Myth

The elaboration of symbol, myth and archetype is found in the work of Northrop Frye (1957). Not only does Frye's schema provide for links between the symbolic and mythic analyses, but he also elaborates on the levels of dramatic and literary form, genre and mode which are missing in Williams's formulations.<sup>4</sup>

One of Frye's major contributions is the systematization of the four pre-generic mythoi of literature: Tragedy, Comedy, Satire, and Romance. Each of these mythoi is characterized by particular symbols, each with a particular type of hero, vision of the universe, and narrative shape. Further, each mythos is related historically to particular epochs in society, with some cyclic recurrence. Frye's schema is dynamic also, with both centripetal and centrifugal motions. The analysis moves centripetally from the manifest and literal levels to the inner core. This is pictured in Figure 5, Levels 1,2,3,4.<sup>5</sup> In centrifugal motion, the analysis could back away from the text, so to speak, taking in wider and wider perspectives. In this movement Frye relates the controlling symbol, or archetype, to other literary works. Here is a small space where one may insert, even momentarily, this "order of words", "this literature" into a wider social context.

These two different strategies for analysis of text, the semiotic-sign analysis and the symbolic-mythic analysis, derive from two competing and

contradictory paradigms. Both have a structural and synchronic character; both are dynamic in terms of centripetal and centrifugal motions. Frye's schema develops fully the symbolic and mythic dimensions of the literary and dramatic form; thereby complementing the sign-code schema drawn from Elam.

### Internal-External Relations

#### Ideological-Hegemonic Levels

Once the internal and centripetal semiotic and symbolic analyses are accomplished, the movement is then a centrifugal one. One could move from the manifest level of the specific form and relate ideological-hegemonic signs and symbols to the degree of "solution" and transformation of the ideological-hegemonic levels of practice within the social organization.

Williams identifies three main uses of the term ideology:

- (1) a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group
- (2) a system of illusory beliefs -- false ideas or false consciousness -- which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge.
- (3) the general process of the production of meanings and ideas (in Fiske, 1982:144).

The notion of ideological-hegemony includes and goes beyond any of these senses of ideology. Ideology-hegemony is not simply superstructure nor simply base. Relations of subordination and domination are implied

which are fused within a whole particular social order.

Fiske elaborates on the relations of ideology and signification. He draws on Williams's articulation of ideology-hegemony and proposes a triangular model of inter-relationship (See Figure 6), whereby the "relationship between the sign and its myths and connotations, on the one hand, and the user, on the other, is an ideological one" (Fiske, 1982:150). In his view,

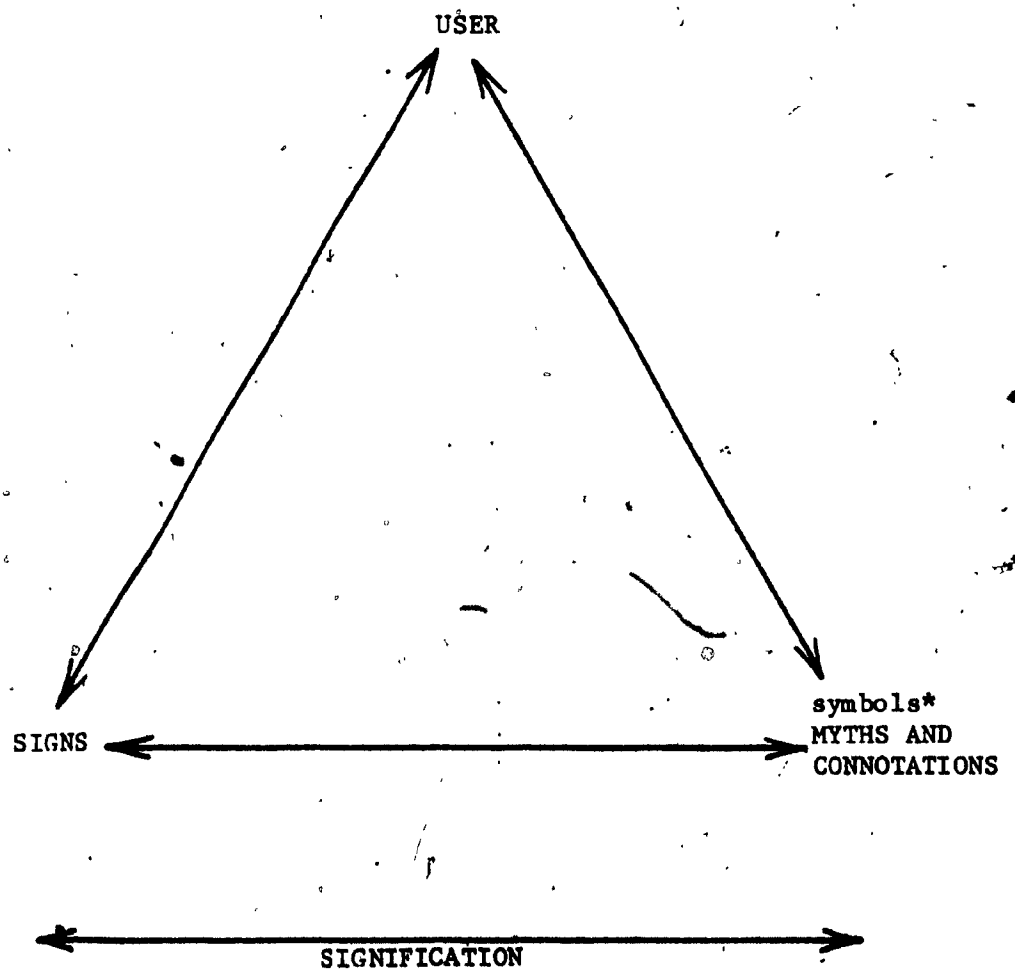
Signs give myths and values concrete form and in so doing both endorse them and make them public. In using signs we maintain and give life to the ideology, but we are also formed by that ideology and by our response to ideological signs (Fiske, 1982:150).

Fiske further points out that,

- (1) my ideology determines the meanings which I find in my interaction with those signs
- (2) the connotators and myths are "the rhetoric of my ideology" (Barthes's phrase)
- (3) ideology (in Williams's third usage) is not a static set of values and ways of seeing, but a practice (Fiske, 1982: 151).

These three dimensions suggest the relations between sign, processes of signification, connotation, mythology and ideology as practices in everyday life. The ideological hegemonic dimension of the art-form constitutes an integral feature of the ideological-hegemonic level of practice.

IDEOLOGY



SOURCE: Fiske, 1982, pp. 151, Figure 25.  
\* Symbols added

Commentary

In the foregoing, the proposed "hypothetical model of description" moves from the generality of Williams's formulations as explicated in his work Culture (1981C) to a more operational level. Such a model would not be necessary if one would wish simply to continue the received and conventional approaches. As Williams points out in the introduction to that work, there already exists research in each of the areas that his mapping comprehends.

What is so original and demanding in Williams is his effort to articulate the set of relations that constitute the sociology of culture as a whole. It is to maintain the connections of the complex of relations that is the challenge. Once again, within a specified social organization, it is the social relations of the various levels of practice -- economic, political, social, ideological, cultural -- that it is important to explicate. These various levels of practice are relatively autonomous. The economic is determinative only in the "last instance". According to a cultural materialist perspective, embedded within these particular practices and their relations are related and realized signifying practices. These signifying practices or systems are in some degree in solution within the levels of the general social system. To explicate these signifying systems or practices, it is necessary to bring them to

the fore as in a gestalt configuration and leave the levels and practices that constitute the social system in the ground, so to speak. In the model, the signifying systems require internal analyses of the particular cultural forms. The societal system is external to the form; yet is related by human social practice. In this model, it is the human actor, often the Cultural Producer, who is the mediator between the external and internal levels of practice.

While a whole range of elements constituting both the external and internal levels of practice are interesting, from a sociological perspective, it is the ideological-hegemonic dimension that is the critical one. An aesthetic interest or performance interest, or whatever, is not ruled out, but it is the ideologic-hegemonic that is the crucial cutting edge. After all we may be interested in the aesthetics of drama, in the costumes, scenery, the actors, actresses, the action, the language, the gestures: all the elements that constitute the dramatic form. It is the meanings, at the level of ideology (values, beliefs, attitudes etc.) that are of significance. What are the meanings, the values? What does the drama signify? What does it communicate? In the final analysis, how does the ideological level of a creative form relate to the ideological level of practice in the social system, that is the economic, political, social, generational, levels? These are the critical questions.

In addressing these questions, Williams's theorizing is important to the extent that it can illuminate actual practice. Even the most cursory look at actual practices seems to bear out the efficacy of the model.

If, for example, we examine the power of the ruling bloc in Canadian society, even at a surface level, the hegemony of the traditional ruling elite appears weakened by sharp socio-political divisions: the colonial and continentalist pulls, the centre and the regions, economically, a developed centre and underdeveloped regions, French and English, to some degree, Catholic and Protestant, Charter and Aboriginal groups, Charter and Immigrant groups, and we could go on. If we take the criteria of a strong national community, then it appears that the ideological bonding between the elites and the rest of the population has been weaker than in the United States or in Britain. But effective ideological bonding must be present. By and large, the economic and political structures are not challenged. Many inequities persist. For example, there remains a lack of representation in the ruling bloc, of women, native peoples and immigrants. The sense of a "national spirit" is constantly being torn away by these sharp fragments. There appears to be a lack of cohesion; a lack of a total, static, autocratic hegemony. But then, are class and power relations -- the crux of ideological hegemony -- operative?

According to Gramsci, as Boggs suggests, there is a growing tendency in a highly organized corporate state economy, for bureaucracy and technology to be the main sources of cultural, intellectual and ideological domination, often obscuring class and power relations (Boggs, 1976:46-48). From Williams's formulations, following Gramsci, ideology-hegemony is a particular mix of bureaucracy, technology, culture and ideology. In the development of Canadian radio theatre under the auspices of an agency of the Canadian state we find a prime example of this mix of relations.

The complex interrelations in Canada between political economy and communications technology has long been signalled by Innis (1956, 1972). The economic history of Canada is as much the rise and fall of the staple trade -- fish, fur, timber, wheat -- as it is the rise and fall of communications technology -- canoe, steamboat, railway systems, airline and telecommunications.

By 1930, radio technology in Canada was no longer experimental. Concomitant with technological developments -- as in the case of broadcasting -- was the tendency towards centralization and bureaucracy. The CRBC in 1932 and the CBC in 1936 came to typify the development of bureaucratic hierarchial organization, greater rationalization and the push toward centralization.

It was not sheer accident that the Canadian



National Railroad (CNR) broadcast the first national programs from receivers installed in railway cars. The launching of "The Romance of Canada" Series by the CNR, the precursor of the CRBC and the CBC, marks the development of broadcasting intellectual content and the use of radio as an instrument to create a national world view. The intent to develop technological expertise was now transferred to the area of content which too suited the economic and political (national and central) interests of those in power positions; i.e., the "ruling bloc". Nevertheless, the creative output or the "expressing ideas" of the artists hired by the CBC appears to contravene prevailing notions that cultural hegemony is complete, total, simple or static. Ideological-hegemony is neither spontaneous nor imposed.

In the thirty year period under scrutiny -- 1930's and 1960's -- two artistic or intellectual formations were found to be working within the same organizational context, the CBC, but exhibiting significantly different styles and communicating different world visions.

In Montreal, there was an intellectual formation under the direction of Rupert Caplan that was separate from the Toronto formation under Andrew Allan. For over thirty years Caplan and his circle produced dramas that, in the main, found consent and approval from the Montreal audience. For the most part, Caplan's dramas

corresponded to dominant or residual ideas, values, attitudes and myths. Works that were emergent and would tend to conflict with the prevailing value systems were limited in numbers and were within the international modernist movement. They were not a direct challenge to the "powers that be". Caplan's autonomy -- "the degree of distance" -- was relatively high. The emergent dramas that Caplan chose to broadcast tended to mirror Canadian society "as it is" and did not pose a threat to the "way it is", that is, to the status quo. This was in contrast to the Toronto organizations in the early years under Andrew Allan. Caplan and his circle maintained separate and conflict relations vis-a-vis Toronto. Caplan, the professional and veteran producer, did not cede to control under Allan.

Allan, as National Supervisor, effected control to a much greater degree over all other regional drama production units. Allan's autonomy -- the "degree of distance" -- was, too, relatively high. In contrast to Caplan, the dramas Allan and his circle produced were, proportionally, and in the majority, emergent in "expressing ideas", that is, were dramas critical of Canadian society. Both encouraged indigenous writing and produced the work of these writers. Both appreciated and produced as radio adaptations the best of world class theatre, and both were opposed, in the some degree, to the CBC. Caplan was opposed to Andrew

Allan as National Drama Supervisor and, thus, the carrier of centralizing tendencies. Allan was opposed to the CBC over the content of his material; material largely rooted in western populism and social democratic thought, the real base of regionalism in English-Canada.

Tentatively, at least, and on the basis of this comparison of the Montreal and Toronto formations in CBC drama production, any notion of a pervasive, hierarchic, automatic, and static control during the thirty year period is rejected.

The comparison would appear to substantiate Williams's general hypothesis of the relative autonomy of cultural producers distinguishable as groups and that there are markedly uneven relations between cultural producers and the institutional contexts in which they work. More generally the initial empirical study appears to substantiate the value of the model of "culture as a realized and related signifying system".

In conclusion, Williams's contribution to the field is of giant proportions. The abstract nature of his key concepts, the high general level of his formulations, the omission of textual strategy: all attest largely to the preliminary state of the art, the sociology of culture. However, the map that Williams proffers serves well as a preliminary and orientating guide. His map points out the areas of the field, their particular shape and alignment. The analytic

model explicated in this chapter now provides a more detailed map.

## NOTES

1. I use the term "hypothetical model of description" following Barthes. Barthes writes: "(Narrative Analysis) is compelled to conceive, first a hypothetical model of description (which American linguists call a "theory") and then proceed gradually from that model down, towards the species, which at the same time partakes in and deviates from the model. It is only at the level of such conformities or discrepancies, and equipped with a single tool of description, that the analyst can turn his attention once more to the plurality of narrative acts ("An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" Communications 8, trans. by Lionel Dussot, in New Literary History 6 (1975):239; Barthes in Harari, 1979:24,25).
2. I use the upper case letters for the first initials in the term "Cultural Producer" explicitly to refer to the group of people who are involved in cultural production and the lower case for the actual single individual who may be the producer and is responsible for production and co-ordination.
3. The idea of levels comes from Althusser's terminology and the implications that in "the last instance" the specific economic and political formation has a deterministic influence on the cultural form (See Ch. 5, p.4.) (Althusser, 1971). Williams acknowledges this though in his theory of cultural materialism this determination is not explicit and has a very weak effect.
4. I call on Frye's (1957) identification of drama as a genre. Forms refers to specific forms of drama as in Ancient Greece or English Renaissance; whereas Williams identifies these as movements.
5. Though Frye identifies four distinct levels for analytic purposes, the distinctions are difficult to maintain. This is especially true for levels 3 and 4 where the differences between the single controlling "archetype" of a drama and "monad" are obscure.

## Chapter 9

### Summary: Continuities, Contradictions, Contributions

In review, Williams's problematic is a complex configuration of epistemological premises, philosophical views, theoretical, methodological and substantive formulations. From the optic of these dimensions, the continuities, limits, discontinuities, contradictions, and contributions, of Williams's problematic are explicated. Further directions for research are suggested.

In chapters three, four, and five is an exposition of Williams's intellectual formation. The analysis in chapter six concentrates on the epistemological premises and methodological issues. Against this ground Williams's theorizing on the sociology of culture is brought to the fore in synoptic form and with gloss or commentary in chapter seven. It is largely from this conceptualization in chapter eight that a hypothetical model of analysis is drawn. The limits and gaps as well as the possibilities become apparent as the theorizing is considered in view of a particular practice.

Of the findings in this study a double irony becomes apparent. In general and schematic terms, it appears that Williams's intellectual formation is marked by a number of dualisms. These are explicated

as the genesis of his intellectual formation is traced. Despite these dualisms, or perhaps because of them -- and one can only conjecture on this point -- Williams's main efforts have been to disclose false dualisms and resolve them through analysis. Yet at the heart of Williams's materialist premises, a duality, or what is really a contradiction, persists unresolved.

### Continuities

First, with respect to the continuities, in Williams's problematic, this dissertation opened with a quotation expressing Williams's set of concerns that was the impetus to his life study. Williams's intent in the 1940's was to recover the ideas of "democracy, socialism, the working class, and education" from the reactionary interpretations that prevailed at Cambridge and in other intellectual circles at that time. Throughout the thirty-year period since, his theoretical and substantive work as well as his political activity have been marked by these original research-guiding interests. The topics in one of Williams's latest books, "Democracy Old and New"; "Class, Politics, and Socialism"; "Culture and Technology"; and "The Culture of Nations" (1983D) attest to this continued interest. In simplest and most general terms these interests can be translated as a "quest for community" and communication. The idea of culture, integral to the notions of both community and

communications, has been a central and controlling concept throughout.

Though the definition of culture has changed as Williams grappled with the complexities, the holistic horizon has not. As part of this holistic vision, Williams's thinking has retained an historical thrust such that the past informs the present and future throughout his oeuvre. History as methodology is a leitmotif of Williams's thought style. Each work, no matter what length, is marked by historical perspective. It is this feature, especially, in Williams's work that is in the tradition of Lukacs, and before him, Dilthey, Simmel, Weber, and of course, Marx. Unlike other such thinkers as Levi-Strauss or Althusser who are anti-historicist (see Glucksmann, 1974), Williams's work is characterized by this persistent historical thread.

Philosophically, a humanist thread also persists. Above all, at the centre of Williams's concerns is the human. Williams's vision of man is active: man is agency -- the creator, actor, doer. Herein is the humanist as well as the materialist base. Williams predilection tends towards a voluntaristic rather than a deterministic vision of man.

With respect to the world, Williams's vision is an optimistic one. Williams refuses both apathetic and nihilistic responses. Without being myopic in his utopian views (see 1980C:196-212; 1983D:14,15), ,



Williams's vision is one of a better world: a meliorative vision. Williams's revolution is not a bloody, disruptive and chaotic one, but a "long revolution"; a long "journey of hope" (see 1983D:241-269, Ch. V.: "Resources for a Journey of Hope").

Closely tied to Williams's interests and philosophic vision is his political stance. Though this work of Williams's problematic concentrates on conceptual and theoretical dimensions, Williams's politics are integrally related. His "left" orientation, with all its permutations, is consistent from his youth. Williams's family was involved with Labour from the beginning. He identifies his position in the late 1940's as "radical populist". By the late 1950's his affinity with the "New Left" is clear. His early involvement with the Labour Party was tenuous: "it was the best we had", he writes. His final disillusionment with Labour came in the late 1960's and came with what Williams's perceived as their co-option. Labour was no longer serving the interests of the working class people. Williams allowed a brief university membership with the Communist Party to lapse after his war service. His critical stance and distance from the Communist Party saved him from being tainted, as many of his contemporaries were, by an allegiance to Stalinism right or wrong. His stance as a radical populist was a questioning one. His convictions about the betterment of the lives of

people, working class people, never carried to an extreme populism, that is, for the people right or wrong. Like Marx, Lukacs, Gramsci and others, though in lesser degree in political embroilments, Williams's politics is encapsulated in what is termed a "philosophy of praxis" Boggs describes:

... what the 'philosophy of praxis' historically represents, above all, is precisely the suppression of the old divisions between philosophy, science, and politics that were traditionally characteristic of Western intellectual life, Marxism included, in favour of a new totalizing synthesis (Boggs, 1976:35).

Continuous throughout Williams's thought style is a totalizing synthesis: his refusal of separation and isolation. His refusal to be categorized even among the left has been a puzzle for those more doctrinaire in their positions. That he is perceived as a "maverick Marxist" attests to this. Williams continues his search: to find some resolution "beyond existing socialism" and beyond existing capitalist democracy (1980C:252-273).

In substance, Williams's works also display a long-time consistency. The topics center on the production of culture: the arts, literature, media, drama, language and meaning. In centripetal fashion, Williams continues to draw into the center whorl ideas and themes that he has been considering for over thirty years. An example is Cobbett, the first of the long

line of intellectuals discussed in Culture and Society (1958), whose ideas were expanded and published recently in a separate volume (Cobbett, 1983A). A second example is Williams's thesis work and subsequent study on drama. These ideas are used for purposes of illustration in Culture (1981C). A third example is his inclusion of an essay "Britain in the Sixties" (1961B) as the first chapter in one of his most recent work, Towards 2000 (1983D).

Of the continuities that are prominent there are then: (1) a research-guiding interest in questions concerning "democracy, socialism, the working class, education"; (2) conceptually, the idea of culture; (3) philosophically, a humanist and voluntaristic vision of man; a meliorative vision of the world; (4) a guiding "philosophy of praxis" which connects philosophy, science and politics in a totality; (5) politically, a "left" orientation, now identified as "social democratic" which would alter existing political, social, economic structures in both socialist and capitalist societies; (6) an historicist perspective deriving from privileging totality and translated methodologically; and (7) a number of substantive ideas and themes (i.e. Cobbett, drama, Britain's state of affairs, culture, community, communication, connection).

Taking account of Williams's oeuvre three phases are identified: (1) The idea of culture "as a whole way

of life" is dominant in these writings. From 1950-1960 is the set, Culture and Society (1958); The Long Revolution (1961B); and Keywords (1976) among others. (2) From 1960-1970, much of Williams's substantive work on drama, literature, communication and technology is accomplished. Outstanding among the works of this phase for the exposure of false dualities are his Modern Tragedy (1966D) and The Country and the City (1973A). (3) In the third and present phase, post-1970, Williams's categories of thought are reformulated along Marxist lines. The ensemble of works includes: Marxism and Literature (1977C); Politics and Letters (1979B); the essays in Problems in Materialism and Culture (1980C); Culture (1981C); and Towards 2000 (1983D). The idea of culture expounded in Culture (1981C) is now redefined as "culture as a realized and related signifying system". The position that Williams's articulates is identified as "cultural materialism". The notion of "sensibility" which had somehow trickled down from Eliot and Leavis is, long gone. In Culture (1981C) the construct "structure of feeling" is no longer present.

The changes in Williams's thinking can easily be misconstrued. Some would argue for a "young" Williams against a "mature" Williams as has been debated about Marx and Lukacs.<sup>1</sup> The notion of an epistemological break or rupture distorts what is a developmental and human process. Who among us is so developed, so mature

at the outset of one's life work as to be entirely consistent, entirely unchanging? Rather than assess a fragment of a person's output, the position in this dissertation is to take a holistic gestalt perspective wherein continuities, discontinuities and contradictions can be appreciated. Taking a piece-meal approach to Williams's problematic cannot do justice to the complexity. Eagleton, for his own intent and interests, cuts off his critique of Williams soon after Williams's first phase; barely acknowledges the second; and gives the slightest nod to the third. As a result, the value of his critique is largely diminished, even though some of his insights are penetrating.

In this study, the weight is on Williams's theorizing on the "sociology of culture". It is read and interpreted in continuous swing first, with the other set of texts that constitute Williams's Marxist phase, and then, with the rest of Williams's works which constitute the still wider whole. Here too, there is a constant oscillation from fore to ground. The work Culture (1981C) exemplifies Williams's cumulative efforts. It is an integrative work, bringing within its core the substance of study on drama which Williams developed over a thirty-year period, and bringing into play the cultural-materialist perspective which Williams developed explicitly over a ten-year period from 1971.

The work Culture (1981C) is a map to the territory

of the sociology of culture. The map is a preliminary one with hypothetical formulations. The preliminary nature attests as much to the state of Williams's work as to the state of the art. Williams posits a rich inventory of theoretical constructs for the set of relations which constitute the area of the sociology of culture. To review, these are: the sociology of institutions (or the instituted relations between the artists and the mode of production); of formations; of production and reproduction; of the art; of the social organization. The controlling concept of these relations is culture defined as "a realized and related signifying system". The emphasis from the early formulation of culture "as a whole way of life" is altered to allow space for mediations and to put the communicative nature of culture at the heart of the definition.

The vision of a totality is not changed as Williams moves from an organic notion of the cultural whole to a systemic one (culture, as "system"). The emphasis now though, is on mediations: the levels of practice. This idea of "levels of practice" is drawn from Althusser's formulations and is an acknowledgement of the relative autonomy and the relative distance of various levels of practice whether these are societal, political, economic, generational, ideological, artistic, or other. The relations between general levels and that of specific levels are apprehended

within this whole.

Within this totality Williams now posits the centrality within culture of communicative processes, i.e. signifying practices. With one stroke, by exemplifying from the history of dramatic forms, he demonstrates how the historical perspective relates to structural semiotic practices. Conceptually he provides tools -- the constructs, residual/archaic, dominant, and emergent, -- to depict the relations between significant structures. Unlike Goldmann's formulations which posit homologous relations or one-to-one correspondences between significant structures, Williams's formulations allow space for contestation and contradiction, albeit within the system, that is, "the realized and related signifying system".

In summation Williams makes a number of new contributions to the sociology of culture. Among them are the following: (1) The construct "culture as realized and related signifying system" posits a holistic view and moves away from separated and fragmented study. The emphasis is on the interrelations of areas of study (i.e. social relations of artists within formations, institutions, the wider societal framework). (2) The materialist position, which points to the interrelatedness of the "cultural" and the "material" in the art form, is a move away from a rigid understanding of base/superstructure. Within Williams's cultural materialist perspective, the art

form is not simply superstructure; the base is not simply determining. (3) With respect to the relations between the diachronic and synchronic the historical development (diachronic) of the art form, drama, is brought into play with semiotic (synchronic) or the symbolic and signalling dimensions. (4) There is the centrality of signifiatory practices and suggestions as to how they relate to other levels of practice within a whole social organization. (5) There is a humanist focus on the social relations of cultural producers and the role and definition of the intellectual. (6) The concepts of "archaic", "residual", "dominant" and "emergent" identify the complexity and the transformations of significant structures such as idea systems and the relations to other systems. Here is a move away from homologous relations or simplistic mirror notions. (7) The idea of "levels of practice" allows for relations to be discerned between general and specific practices. The idea of "variable distances of practices" allows for the relative autonomy of practices to be discerned. (8) The idea of "ideological hegemony" is forwarded, though it is not developed. These are among the rich and varied theoretical and conceptual ideas that come together in the work Culture (1981C). The work by itself is schematic, generalized, hypothetical and preliminary. For a fuller appreciation and understanding it needs to be read along with Williams's works on drama, technology and



those expounding his Marxist position.

### Limitations

The limits of Williams's theorizing become more apparent when considered in relation to a practice. A number of immediate questions arise. For example, how is one to maintain a juxtaposition of the social relations of artists, the art forms produced, production and reproduction processes, the formations, institutions, and the social organization? Is the idea of "solution" more than a vivid metaphor? What is the organizing principle of selection? We now have ideas of "variable relations"; of "variable autonomy"; of "formational analysis"; of the "materiality" of the art form; of "variable degrees of symmetry" between cultural production and general social production". Are there too many constructs? Is the palate too rich? Again, how is selection to be made? How do we move from these generalized constructs to definitional and objective ones in view of the empirical field? Once again, where is the art form? How are we to analyze the art form? What methods of analysis are appropriate among the large number of competing strategies? What these questions and the generalized and abstract nature of the categories indicate is the preliminary state of theoretical formulation of the field. The methodological gaps are obvious. The question of methodology now becomes critical.

On the one hand, we have a general orientation, an holistic approach. We have a large array of conceptual tools. We have a direction: it is not separated isolated aspects but relations that are to be determined.

On the other hand, the biggest gap methodologically is the relations between specific practices and generalized practices. What is the methodological cutting edge to culture "as system"? What is implicated in system? The issues are deeper than theory or concept construction and deeper than methodological technique or strategy. Here the epistemological premises of Williams's problematic are salient.

### Contradictions

To recapitulate, two moments, an idealist and a materialist, constitute the main contours of Williams's epistemology. The idealist moment is rooted in Williams's life experiences. These are acknowledged by Williams as influencing his intellectual formation on both a fictional and theoretical plane.

The life-experiential aspects derive from a number of dualities. To reiterate, these are: social class (working class and intellectual elite); geographic (Pandy and Cambridge, country and city, Wales and England); cultural (Welsh and English language, history, customs, attitudes, etc.); religious

(church and chapel); and psychosocial (in the person of Williams's father: the "significant other").

In addition to experiential dualities, the roots of Williams's intellectual formation derive from two distinct traditions: the British literary tradition of cultural and socially aware critics and the Marxist humanist tradition. Within the literary tradition, the significant figures whose thinking were a spur to Williams are Eliot, Richards and Leavis. There is no clear-cut rejection of these thinkers but a revaluation. Whereas their elitism and anti-democratic conservatism is rejected, "the idea of culture as a whole way of life" is retained. This is a central idea which guides Williams for over two decades. As an organic concept of the whole there are idealist overtones which Williams finally relinquishes for a more materialist definition, culture as "realized and related signifying system". This alteration is only made explicit in the work Culture (1981C). Williams's efforts at reconciling his radical perspective with Leavis's educative and humanist concerns end in failure and the folding in 1948 of the publication Politics and Letters, which sought to articulate this stance. During the ten year period --1948 to 1958-- a time of self-imposed exile, Williams began to find the materialist and humanist categories with which he could reformulate his ideas.

The materialist moment of Williams's epistemology

did not begin precisely with his revaluation of Marx or his discovery of Lukacs and Gramsci. The materialist roots are also within Williams's early formation. As a railway worker's son, Williams political orientation was developed early towards labour, towards social democracy and towards people in the forms that it usually took in the period from the 1930's to the 1960's: Labourist, Socialist, Communist and Social Democrat. At the time when Williams began his first major work in the 1940's -- Culture and Society -- he rejected the rigid Marxist categories or formulations that were available at the time. When the early works of Marx became available, and those of Lukacs and Gramsci, Williams's proclivity became clear. After some years of substantive work on a variety of aspects of culture -- drama, literary, communication, television -- Williams reformulated his theories of culture along dialectical, materialist, humanist and historicist lines.

The resolution of false dualisms has been a major thrust in Williams's work. Even before Williams's explicit Marxist platform there were indications: Williams rejected dissociated, fragmentary specialisms and abstractions from the beginning. Though he has been criticized for these very tendencies in his own early works (i.e. in Culture and Society; The Long Revolution), relations, connection, and wholeness have been the rubric of measure for him. The books, Modern

Tragedy and Country and City best exemplify his early exposure and resolution of false dualities. It is with great caution and great reluctance that Williams moves from his totalistic vision of culture "as a whole way of life". He finally finds a way towards mediations. His ideal still is to privilege the whole. In his zeal to overcome the idealist or culturalist tendencies he veers towards materialism.

In claiming and advocating a position of "cultural materialism", Williams does move far from the idealist-phenomenological tendencies or past moments. He cannot justly be labelled as an idealist as Eagleton has done, nor can he be accused of being a "culturalist" either. Nevertheless, the premises of Williams's materialism needs probing. And the implications of the whole construct "cultural materialism" must be examined. It is on examination of the materialist tendency that the unresolved duality emerges. It is a duality that might never be resolved; a veritable contradiction. The two areas of Williams's deliberations on materialism wherein the contradictions lie are best exemplified (1) in his explication of psychoanalysis and experimental psychology and language; and (2) the relations of biology, the individual, and society.

With respect to the first, Williams advocates some "cross-matching" procedure to relate the findings from psychoanalysis and experimental psychology. On the surface it appears reasonable. But what Williams does

not consider is the gap in interest, goals, methods, object and outcome that continues to inhere in the disjunction between human and cultural sciences. Here is no simple fusion. Here is no simple "solution" (either in terms of dissolving metaphor or in the sense of an answer). Here is no simple relationship as the long-standing methods debates go on.

The second example, on which Williams is all but silent, is the relations between biology, the individual, and society. Williams's "sociology of culture" takes up its cultural materialist position from the point of view of production and reproduction. His focus then is on the practitioners and the practices: the production and reproduction of the art form. The art form used for illustrative purposes is the dramatic form. Williams's "sociology of culture" is pointed largely at culture in the narrow sense of specified art forms. Where in Williams's theoretical formulations can we take account of the human form: the lived relationships, the cultural and the material dimensions of sexism or racism, for example? The emphasis on the production of commodity form does not extend simply to lived relations in all their complexity. The object of inquiry is quite distinct. Do we need a separate "sociology of culture" to account for lived relationships not only for women inter-ethnic or inter-group relations, but the young and the old?

Williams's limitations with respect to a

"sociology of culture" become clear. If we can accept a focus on the production and reproduction of the cultural form, Williams's theorizing opens up many fruitful lines to follow, many general and orienting constructs to operationalize. He has indicated and has begun to make specifications with respect to the dramatic form. The implications of culture "as a related and signifying system" require much fuller specification. The static and quietistic implications of system need to be addressed. We need to specify the sets of relations. What are the relations of the cultural component and the material component? There is no simple transference from the fusion of culture and material in the art form to the human form.

With respect to the human form, it is another matter. Within a "sociology of culture" the person cannot be reduced wholly to social relations. "Material", "biologic" or "natural" determinants must be retained as distinct. The epistemological premises must recognize distinctions at various levels of abstraction. Conceptual distinctions need to be developed and particularities should not be dissolved in some "solution".

In summary terms, Williams's problematic, which comprises five component levels or dimensions, can be characterized as follows. At the epistemological level, Williams holds an implicit theory of knowledge. There are two moments of this epistemology, idealist

and materialist. Williams's own ground of knowledge is derived from a number of experiential dualisms and a dual intellectual heritage. Consciously Williams's efforts are directed at the resolution of dualities. His thrust is typified by a holism wherein knowledge from both the human and cultural sciences and from the physical sciences are to be related, that is "cross-matched". Williams's epistemology embodies both empiricist and anti-empiricist conceptions of reality. Williams's epistemology is historicist, with a tendency towards the primacy of history over structure. There is also a tendency towards a logocentrism which would privilege meaning over form; the literal over the metaphorical; the intelligible over the sensible; the positive over the negative; logic over illogic; and reason over unreason (see Fekete, 1982; Culler, 1982:93). The relation between the two concepts which comprise the "cultural-materialist" construct needs refinement. The theory construction applied to the production and reproduction of cultural form or the commodity form does not simply transfer to human lived forms. It is necessary to specify the object of inquiry at the level of abstraction where it is found. Williams neglects the "epistemological distinctions that need to be maintained if one is not to confound general determinations with their particular effects" (Soper, 1979:71).

Philosophically, Williams's view is a dialectical



one wherein both idealism and materialism are understood as a part of a totality. The "philosophy of praxis" refers to such a holism. By constructing materialist concepts in his theorizing on the sociology of culture, that is, the social relations of production and the production and reproduction of cultural form, Williams veers towards a materialism. Williams cedes that social formations, though very complex today, are ultimately determined in the last instance by the economy. As in Althusser's philosophy, "structures are tied to a material base in the real world, in practice as well as in theory" (Glucksmann, 1971:162). Like Althusser, Williams aims to change the world, but he is not a revolutionary socialist in the sense of advocating bloody, chaotic, disruptive decisive revolution. For Williams revolutionary change can and does evolve slowly through critical analysis, information and insight which inform political action. Unlike Althusser or Levi-Strauss, Williams continues to put his faith in human agency, intent and action. It is a voluntaristic, meliorative and optimistic vision; radical but with "reins" on.

Theoretically, Williams's constructs are developed both inductively and deductively: from empirical and substantive study and by way of metaphor and analogy. The controlling concept of culture as a "whole way of life" comes metaphorically from an organic conception of the whole. The turn to culture "as a realized and

related signifying system" comes after the multidimensional historical semantics that he examines. The construct is descriptive and serves to connote the materialist (realized: "real"), the structuralist (related: structure is relations), and communicative components (signifying system) that are central to a cultural materialist position.

Williams's theoretical constructions of a "sociology of culture" within a cultural materialist perspective are rich with concepts in each area. The historical material thrust is key in the formulations. The concepts at this stage of theory and concept construction are orienting, general and abstract. Williams has aimed widely at the elaboration of concepts that are appropriate to the specific object, drama.

The dialectic for Williams, as it is for Lukacs, is the main methodological principle. In his most recent works over the past ten years the whole remains privileged, as it was prior. The historical semantics, an integral and consistent approach throughout all Williams's work, is emblematic of this a totality: the whole comprises past, present, and future. Culture as a "whole way", culture as a "whole system" expresses this holism.

Substantively, Williams has demonstrated the value of this methodological approach. Even before he became explicit in his Marxist position, he has shown in The

Country and the City how the reified notions to country or to city became attached. Williams's analyses and historical survey well refutes the false dichotomies and either-or logic. In Modern Tragedy, Williams also points out the false dichotomy between life and literature. Among others Williams refutes the separate categories of base/superstructure, culture/nature, and the materiality of language. As a case in point, the work Culture (1981C), brings to the fore the methodological problems. The most glaring gap is the lack of an approach or strategy to an analysis of the specific cultural form, drama, which is fitting for a cultural materialism. The holism of culture "as system" carries with it implications of homeostasis, the lack of a principle of determinism, and the lack of a cutting edge. There is the danger that all contradictions and conflicts are cancelled out so that "the system" is in balance, and by implication, in quiet and peace. Surely, this is not Williams's intention. Both history and structure figure in a "realized and related signifying system". Conjoining the historical with the structural is not accomplished by positing a unity; nor by fiat. Again the methodological approach requires specification.

For Williams, culture is a "signifying system". In contrast, for Eco, the project for semiotics is "to study the whole of culture, and thus to view an immense range of objects and events as signs" (1979:6):

Williams's response is to posit the notion of "solution": "to turn the key twice: first, to examine the socio-cultural phenomena; then to examine the semiotic and their relations. The concept of "solution" is attractive and depicts the relations metaphorically. Methodologically, the articulation requires operational concept formation.

Further, the conjoining of the physical and social sciences raises the question of epistemological premises and methodological procedure. Williams's "sociology of culture" is concentrated on the production and reproduction of cultural form and the social relations of production.

If the focus is to broaden to include not only cultural form but the human form and relations, then there are at least two caveats. The first, which accepts the major premises of Williams's cultural materialism, is the need to attend to distinctions or differences at the level of epistemological premises. To quote the words of Soper so aptly put,

an anti-reductionist methodology will be justified even if ontological distinctions between the various natural and human sciences are discovered - as in fact both Marx and Freud respectively predicted or hoped would be the case - to be unnecessary. For even if, as Marx suggested, 'natural science will in time include the science of man as the science of man will include natural science', there is still the question of how one differentiates between the various levels of investigation that co-exist within this single science. Though it remains in principle feasible that eventually a system

of correlations and connections between social and psychic and natural processes, will be discovered one can only begin the task of its discovery after a science has pursued the full extent of the autonomy of its social or psychic object and the search for a unified system should not be allowed prematurely to determine the cause of any scientific study (Soper, 1979:70).

While Soper is addressing the materialism of Timpanaro in these remarks, the thrust is relevant to Williams. Within his position of cultural materialism is the need to examine the presuppositions of the unity he posits.

A second warning comes from questioning the base itself: the presuppositions of Williams's cultural materialist position. For example, among others, Baudrillard questions the validity of the mode of production in today's advanced capitalist societies. For Baudrillard, we are beyond form commodity into form sign. As he puts it,

...that our society is still largely dominated by the logic of commodities is irrelevant. When Marx set out to analyze capital, capitalist industrial production was still largely a minority phenomenon. When he designated political economy as the determining sphere, religion was still largely dominant. ... the mutation concerns the passage from the form - commodity to the form - sign, from the abstraction of the exchange of material products under the law of general equivalences to the operationalization of all exchanges under the law of the code. With this passage to the "political economy of the sign" it is not a simple "commercial prostitution" of all values ... It is a matter of the passage of all values to the exchange - sign value under the hegemony of the code. That is, of a structure of control and of power much more subtle and more totalitarian than that of

exploitation (Baudrillard, 1975:121).

Baudrillard's argument is compelling. Under the "political economy of the sign", no matter how "embourgeoisified" a Black, an immigrant, a Jew, an Indian, a woman or the old may be; a Black remains first a Black, an immigrant remains first an immigrant; a woman first a woman and so on: all are "marked" terms. (Baudrillard, 1975:136). Williams's position appears benign in the face of the objectifications, in the face of racism, sexism and militarism. From a cultural materialist platform, Williams's response to such objectifications is largely a rational one. He looks to such groups within the Women's Movement, Nuclear Disarmament, and the Ecological for hope. He looks to an elaboration and articulation of positive human resources "towards a journey of hope". This thrust appears rather gracious and kindly in the face of the arms race, sexual and political violence and ecological exploitation.

#### Further Directions

The foregoing indicates four main directions for further study. First, this dissertation is limited largely to an exposition and analysis -- a decoupage -- of the internal dimensions which comprise Williams's problematic. This is a first step in analysis and aims towards an explanation of Williams's thought style.

For a fuller explanation and understanding the outcome of this decoupage needs to be taken as the first step. A second step would start with the outcome of this inquiry and move in continuous oscillation to larger significant structures within which Williams's problematic is embedded. The beginnings of such oscillation is found in Chapters three and four and five of this work. This study has taken on the task of the first delimitation of the internal dimensions of Williams's thought structure and their interrelatedness. For a refinement in explanation and understanding; the larger englobing structures -- philosophical, theoretical, historical, sociological -- could be identified. The value of such elaborated study is in the comparative and interdisciplinary insights it can afford.

As the dissertation stands, the comparative value is just suggested. Comparative work is a second important direction to follow. The choice of using a structural analysis allows some immediate comparisons to be made. Glucksmann has demonstrated the value of this kind of comparative study across interdisciplinary lines in elucidating the problematics of Levi-Strauss and Althusser. Specific convergencies and divergencies are identified. Because of the great complexity and interdisciplinary nature of many contemporary cultural critics, this structural approach is most useful. It can add a systematization of and a probe of underlying

structural elements which is lacking in much comparative work. Williams's thought style needs to be compared with the other contemporary cultural critics, among them, Levi-Strauss, Althusser, Goldmann, Douglas, Berger, Foucault, Habermas and Baudrillard. At the moment, cultural theory is replete with individual and competing contributions each with its own interests, objects, theories, concepts and methods. For the field to develop some systematization is needed if not a synthetic framework created. Comparative analysis along structural dimensions would permit some "handle" on the field.

A third direction to be taken is the development of the methodological and substantive dimensions: theory and practice. An important and original part of this work is the hypothetical model of analysis derived from Williams's postulations on the "sociology of culture". The suggested model is intended to advance Williams's theorizing. As such, the basic premises -- holism, dialectic, humanist, historical, materialism -- of Williams's "cultural materialism" are accepted. The explication of Williams's work on the "sociology of culture" reveals the preliminary state of the art and of Williams's formulations. While keeping a vision of the whole, it is the social relations of production and reproduction of a cultural form that are the main object of Williams's thrust. Williams's concepts are general, abstract and orienting. We need to get into



the field, so to speak, and develop a map with greater specificity. The hypothetical model proposed moves towards greater specificity and a level of abstraction appropriate to the object of study, the cultural form drama. The "intellectual" or "cultural producers" and their "expressing ideas" (ideological hegemony) are at the fore of the model. This thrust provides a cutting edge which is lost in Williams's mapping. The next step would be to apply the frame to empirical study. This study was undertaken in the first instance towards the illumination of Canadian cultural products and production, Canadian practices and practitioners. An analysis of CBC radio drama -- these indigenous and original Canadian cultural forms -- in relation to the Canadian social formation, using a conceptual and theoretical framework derived from Williams is a step to be undertaken. There is much work to be accomplished both theoretically and empirically: both in refining the conceptual apparatus and in illuminating this important aspect of Canadian sociology, history, dramatic literature and communications.

Williams's theorizing on the "sociology of culture" and the model drawn out takes as focus the cultural product or the form commodity and the social relations that pertain. A fourth direction for further study -- outside of the limits of this focus -- would concentrate on the human form. That is, it is the

"sociology of culture" which would take into account lived cultural relations: i.e., male-female; English-French; Black-White; young-old. Within a whole social organization levels of lived practices can be examined. The definition of culture "as a realized and related signifying system" does not necessarily exclude lived relations as an object of inquiry. Just as Williams began to explicate from the general to specific with respect to the form drama, work can be undertaken to examine such relations as sexism or racism within advanced western industrial capitalism. What is required is detailed articulation at an appropriate level of abstraction given the object of inquiry.

In summary, Williams's problematic opens up a number of fruitful lines of inquiry to follow. These are: (1) the development of Williams's unique contribution; both explanation and understanding in wider historical and social contexts; (2) comparative and interdisciplinary study and development of some synthesis; (3) the refinement and development of a model of analysis in relation to empirical study; the case in point, CBC radio drama; and (4) studies of such lived relations as sexism and or racism. Other directions derive from such rich work.

Finally, and essentially, this dissertation contributes to an appreciation of the work of Raymond Williams. This study has been a journey along a number of disciplinary lines: history of drama, literature,

cultural theory, Marxism, semantics, communications among others. Williams's thought style -- his erudition, depth and complexity -- contributes in a most valuable way to contemporary issues on culture. His works are a challenge academically and practically. Against a number of simplistic "isms" -- economism, idealism, materialism, culturalism, and negativism -- Williams's problematic offers important insights and human resources for a "journey of hope".

## NOTES

1. Jameson points to a "biographical myth" which surrounds Lukacs. Critics have fallen into two camps: those who read Lukacs's life-work as a continuous whole and those who read it as discontinuous with epistemological breaks. Discontinuity has been used negatively and taken as failure, a lack of coherence and has served to discredit portions or the whole works. Lukacs as well as Marx have been subject to such debates, i.e. those who argue the "young" Marx or "the older" Marx, the "young" Lukacs, the "older" Lukacs (see also Jameson, 1971; Kolakowski, 1978 and Meszaros, 1972). Williams's works lend themselves to a similar polemic. My position is to take account of the entire oeuvre or thought style, and not posit an epistemological break.

## Appendix 1

### Chronology: Life and Works

#### Life

- 1921 Born Llwyn Derw, Pandy, Abergavenny, Gwent; only son of Henry Joseph Williams and Esther Gwendolene (Bird). Father railway signalman, Pandy (GWR). Father born 1896, third son of farm labourer, later roadman; mother born 1890, third daughter of farm bailiff.
- 1925 To Llanfihangel Crucorney (NP; Church of Wales) elementary school.
- 1926 Father involved in General Strike and secretary of Branch Labour Party.
- 1932 County scholarship to King Henry VIII Grammar School, Abergavenny.
- 1935 Declined confirmation in Church of Wales. Worked for labour Party candidate (Michael Foot) in General Election.
- 1936 School Certificate (Central Welsh Board); exemption from matriculation.
- 1937 Joined Left Book Club group, Abergavenny.  
Aug: Welsh League of Nations Union scholarship to Youth Conference, Geneva.
- 1938 July: Higher School Certificate (English, French, Latin); State Scholarship.  
Sept: Speaker at public meeting against Munich agreement, Abergavenny.
- 1939 Spring: worked full-time for Labour Party candidate (Frank Hancock, member of Peace Pledge Union), by-election.  
October: entered Trinity College, Cambridge; joined Cambridge University Socialist Club.  
December: joined Student branch, Communist Party.
- 1940 Member of CUSC Writer's Group;  
June: Preliminary Examination, English Tripos.  
July: joined LDV (Home Guard), Pandy.
- 1941 Chairman, Arts and Education section, people's Convention, Cambridge.  
Co-founder Trinity College Union.

- June: English Tripos, Part One.  
 July: called up to Royal Corps of Signals,  
 Prestatyn; trained as wireless operator.
- 1942 January-June: Officer Cadet Training Unit,  
 Church Stretton and Larkhill.  
 June: commissioned into Royal Artillery; posted  
 to 21st Anti-Tank Regiment, Guards Armoured  
 Division (Somerset).  
 June: married Joy Dalling.
- 1943 Lieutenant, Royal Artillery; Instructors' Course  
 on Sherman tank.
- 1944 June: with regiment to Normandy.  
 July: daughter (Merryn) born.  
 September: advance unit, liberation of Brussels.  
 Nijmegen-Arnhem operation.
- 1945 Operations Ardennes, Hamburg, Kiel Canal.  
 April-October: editor army newspaper, Twentyone  
 (pseudonym, Michael Pope).  
 October: Class B release to return to Cambridge;  
 placed on Class Z Reserve List of Officers.
- 1946 June: English Tripos, Part Two. Senior  
 Scholarship, Trinity.  
 September: appointed Staff Tutor, Oxford  
 University Tutorial Classes Committee (joint  
 committee of Extra-Mural Delegacy and Workers'  
 Educational Association). Classes in  
 International Relations.  
 September: son (Ederyn) born; moved to Seaford,  
 Sussex.
- 1947 Tutorial Classes in Literature.
- 1949 Class in Theories of Culture.
- 1950 Worked for Labour Party in General Election.  
 Son (Madawc) born.
- 1951 Recalled to Army, as Class Z Reserve Officer,  
 for service in Korean War. Refused recall.  
 Registered as conscientious objector after  
 Tribunal hearing, Fulham. Discharged from Army.
- 1952 March: moved to Hastings.
- 1955 Worked full-time for Labour Party in General  
 Election.
- 1957 Aldermaston march.  
 Universities and Left Review Club, London.

- 1959    Joined editorial board, New Left Review.
- 1960    July: moved to Oxford as Resident Tutor, Extra-Mural Delegacy.  
          Speaker at NUT conference on Popular Culture;  
          Communications commissioned from this by Penguin.  
          Witness at Lady Chatterley trial.
- 1961    Appointed Lecturer in English, Cambridge;  
          elected Fellow of Jesus college; moved to Hardwick, Cambridge, September.
- 1961-6   Member of CND; member of Labour Party.
- 1964    Full-time work for Labour candidate, Cambridgeshire.
- 1965    Member of Cambridge Left Forum; Vietnam Solidarity Campaign.
- 1966    February: worked for Labour Party candidate, Cambridge.  
          July: resigned from Labour Party.  
          August: planning meeting leading to May Day Manifesto.
- 1967    Convenor, May Day Manifesto working group.
- 1968    Lectures in Scandinavia and Italy.
- 1969    Chairman, National Convention of the Left.  
          Chairman, Convention Commission.
- 1970    Convention Commission breaks up, May, following disagreements on policy during General Election.
- 1971    Lecturing in Italy.
- 1973    Lecturing in USA and Canada.
- 1974    February: worked for Labour Party in General Election.  
          Appointed Professor of Drama, Cambridge.
- 1975    Lecturing in Germany.
- 1976    Lecturing in Italy, Yugoslavia, Germany, France.
- 1983    Retired Professor of Drama, Cambridge.

Works

- 1940 Wrote short stories Mother Chapel and Red Earth; articles on Defence Against Air Raids and Literature and the Cult of Sensibility; collaborated on pamphlet on Soviet invasion of Finland April-June; editor Cambridge University Journal (newspaper).
- 1941 Editor Outlook.  
Wrote Sack Labourer (publ. English Story).
- 1947 Wrote Brynllwyd (first version of Border Country); A Fine Room to be Ill in (English Story, 1948); began Drama from Ibsen to Eliot.
- 1947-8 Editor, with Wolf Mankowitz and Clifford Collins, of The Critic and Politics and Letters (incorporating The Critic); articles include A Dialogue on Actors; Saints, Revolutionaries, Carpetbaggers; The Soviet Literary Controversy; The Lower Fourth at St. Harry's; The Exiles of James Joyce; Radio Drama; The State and Popular Culture; ... And Traitors Sneer; How to be Delicate when Shedding Blood.
- 1948 Completed Drama from Ibsen to Eliot (publ. 1952).  
Wrote documentary film script for Paul Rotha on the English agricultural and industrial revolutions (film not made).  
Wrote radio script (rejected), subsequently novel (unpublished): Ridyear, of the Yukon goldrush.  
Politics and Letters closed, following financial difficulties and personal disagreements among editors.
- 1949 Wrote second version of Brynllwyd.  
Wrote Reading and Criticism (publ. 1950).  
Class in Theories of Culture.
- 1950 Began The Idea of Culture (subsequently Culture and Society).  
Wrote Adamson (unpublished novel).
- 1951 Wrote Village on the Border (revision of Brynllwyd).  
Wrote the Grasshoppers (unpublished novel).
- 1952 Rewrote Village on the Border.



- 1953 Published The Idea of Culture (Essays in Criticism, I, iii).  
Wrote Drama in Performance (publ. 1954) and, with Michael Orrdm, Preface to Film (publ. 1954).
- 1953- Contributor to Highway. Adult Education, Essays in Criticism.
- 1954 Village on the Border rewritten as Border Village.  
Wrote Culture and Society, Part I, chapters 2-6.
- 1955 Wrote Culture and Society, Part I, 1 and 7, and Part II, 1-4.
- 1956 Completed Culture and Society (publ. 1958).
- 1957 Border Village rewritten as Border Country.  
Wrote King Macbeth (unpublished play).
- 1958 Culture is Ordinary (in Conviction).  
Rewrote Border Country (publ. 1960).  
Began Essays and Principles (subsequently The Long Revolution).
- 1959 Completed The Long Revolution (publ. 1961).  
Wrote Koba.  
Joined editorial board, New Left Review.
- 1959- Contributor: New Left Review, Tribune, Sanity, Essays in Criticism, Critical Quarterly, Kenyon Review, Partisan Review, Guardian, New Statesman, Views.
- 1960 Began Second Generation.
- 1961 Wrote Communications (publ. 1962).
- 1962 Completed Second Generation (publ. 1964).
- 1963 Began Modern Tragedy.  
Wrote David Hume: Reasoning and Experience (The English Mind, 1964).
- 1964 Completed Modern Tragedy (publ. 1966).
- 1965 Began The Fight for Manod (novel).  
Began The Country and the City.
- 1966 Wrote A Letter from the Country (play produced BBC 2).  
Revised Drama from Ibsen to Eliot as Drama from Ibsen to Brecht (publ. 1968).  
August: planning meeting leading to May Day

## Manifesto.

- 1967 Wrote Public Inquiry (play produced BBC 1).  
May: First May Day Manifesto published.  
Revised Communications (new edition publ. 1968).
- 1968 Wrote first half of The Country and the City.  
May: Penguin May Day Manifesto published.
- 1968-72 Contributor to The Listener (television reviews).
- 1969 Wrote (from lecture notes 1961-68) The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence (publ. 1970) and Introduction to Pelican Book of English Prose, II.  
Writing The Fight for Manod.  
Wrote Radical and/or Respectable (The Press We Deserve, 1970).
- 1970 Wrote Orwell (publ. 1971).  
Writing The Volunteers (novel).  
Wrote Ideas of Nature (publ. The Shaping Inquiry, 1971).
- 1971 Writing The Country and the City.  
Began The Brothers (novel).  
Memorial lecture for Lucien Goldmann (publ. NLR, 1971).
- 1972 Writing The Volunteers; Marxism and Literature.  
Wrote Social Darwinism in Literature and Social Thought (publ. The Limits of Human Nature, 1973).
- 1973 Wrote Television: Technology and Cultural Form (publ. 1974).
- 1974 Writing Marxism and Literature; Keywords; The Fight for Manod.
- 1975 Completed Keywords (publ. 1976).  
Writing Marxism and Literature; The Fight for Manod.  
Revised Communications (new edition, 1976).
- 1976 Completed Marxism and Literature (publ. 1977).  
Completed The Volunteers.  
Wrote: The Social Significance of 1926 (Llafur, 1977); The Case of English Naturalism (in English Drama: Forms and Development, 1977); essay in My Cambridge (1977).
- 1977 Wrote The Fiction of Reform (TLS); Science-Fiction and Utopias (Studies in SF, 1978).

- 1978 Completed The Fight for Manod; Problems of Materialism, NLR 109; The Welsh Industrial Novel (Cardiff, 1979); Means of Communication as Means of Production (prilozi, Zagreb). The Volunteers: A Novel. n.p. (publ. 1978).
- 1979 The Fight for Manod (publ. 1979); Politics and Letters; (publ. 1979).
- 1980 "Beyond Actually Existing Socialism" (publ. 1980); "The Politics of Nuclear Disarmament" (publ. 1980); Problems in Materialism and Culture (publ. 1980).
- 1981 Contact: Human Communication and Its History. Ed. with Ferruccio Rossi-Landi et al. (publ. 1981); Culture (publ. 1981); "Marxism Structuralism and Literary Analysis" (publ. 1981).
- 1983 Cobbett (publ. 1983); "Culture". In Marx: The First Hundred Years. (publ. 1983); "Problems of the Coming Period". (publ. 1983); Towards 2000. (publ. 1983); Writing in Society (publ. 1983).
- 1984 George Orwell. (revised. publ. 1984).

Source: Politics and Letters, 1979, pp. 11-16.

## Appendix 2

### Versions of Dialectic

#### (1) Atomistic-Rationalist-Empiricist

Logical Empiricism is an influential style of thought that represents the atomistic-rationalist-empiricist version today (Radnitzky, 1968). Logical Empiricism has its historical roots in Positivism, and its thrust against metaphysics. Its global program is to articulate an ideal of science. Various themes of this ideal are: a unified science, empirical significance, confirmation, and explanation. Mathematics is the paragon discipline of science and physics is the ideal science. Cybernetics, the Science of Ecology and Systems Theory represent this version.

Its point of departure is a rejection of all a-priori principles. The dialectic is a structure of thought not a structure of reality. The emphasis is on the given in its phenomenal and reified form. The understanding of the real is based on facts and facticity. Reality is understood to be a collection of facts. The attainment of knowledge is through systematic, piece-meal, cumulative addition of facts. The trajectory is linear, that is, knowledge proceeds from a starting point demonstrated through a systematic linear approximation of facts to theorization. It is knowledge about a conceptual system. Its ideal of

knowledge, is that of certainty, clarity, precision, finality and unification. The idea of unified science "runs like a Leit motif through the entire history of philosophy" (Radnitzky, 1969:73).

The underlying assumption is that "the universe is homogeneous, a one-layer world" (Radnitzky, 1969:73). The unified-science vision is ultimately reductive: all facts can never be grasped, only added. Knowledge can only be an abstract, systematic-analytic knowledge of parts. The whole remains unknowable. It is an atomistic additive representation of reality as a conglomeration of things, processes and facts.

## (2) Organicist or Neo-Romantic Totality

The organicist or neo-romantic totality hypostatizes the whole before the parts and makes the whole into a myth (Kosik, 1969:49). The totality is a ready-made whole which is then filled with content, with the properties of the parts and their relationships. A false totality manifests itself in three ways:

1. It is an empty totality lacking reflexes and the determination of individual moments.
2. It is an abstract totality. The whole is formalized against the parts as a "superior reality". It lacks genesis, development, the creation of the whole and

the process of structuring and destructuring.

3. It is a closed whole, a "bad totality". ("bad totality" is a term used by Kurt Konrad in a polemic against formalism, in Kosik, 1969:52).

The authentic subject is replaced by a mythical subject (as in Althusser, Levi-Strauss, the subject is discounted).

### (3) Materialist Dialectic

Some of the features include the following ideas that:

1. Reality is conceived as a concrete totality: as a whole structure in the process of development and self-creation.
2. Facts amount to reality if they are understood as facts of a dialectical whole; as integral parts of the whole.
3. It is not simply all the facts, but a meaningful structure for every fact or group of facts.
4. The dialectical comprehension of objective reality is grasped in dialectical relations between rational and empirical, abstract and concrete, starting point and conclusion, postulate and demonstration. Extremes of mathematical formalism and

metaphysical ontologism are avoided.

5. Every phenomenon can be understood as a moment of the whole. It is both producer and product; determining and determined. There is a reciprocal connection and mediation of the part and whole. This implies that isolated facts are abstractions, artificially isolated moments from the whole.
6. Because the real is a structured whole in the process of developing and creating itself, the knowledge of facts or of a conglomeration of facts becomes knowledge of the position facts occupy in the totality of reality.
7. Human knowledge realizes itself in a spiral movement where every beginning is relative and abstract. It is not a systematic linear fusion of facts with other facts. Rather it is a process of concretization: a process of oscillation, from whole to parts; from parts to whole; from totality to contradictions; from contradictions to totality.
8. It is a correlative spiral process where all concepts enter into reciprocal interplay and reciprocally enlighten each other; a spiral process of mutual co-

penetration. Abstractness, one-sidedness and isolation are overcome. The whole cannot be fossilized. The whole is not a mere summation of relationships, facts, processes; but also their creation, structure and genesis,

9. Social reality is understood as the dialectical unity of base and superstructure. Man is understood as the objective socio-historical subject. A revolutionary conception of society and man is contained in the investigation of social reality and how social reality is created.



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